THE SELF-ASSESSMENT OF HOSPITALITY EMPLOYMENT SKILLS AMONG VOCATIONAL STUDENTS IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

Malaysia needs high skilled workforce to support growth of the industry. With dynamically changing job market and progressive technological change, employees are expected to keep abreast of global economics. In the process of achieving the status of developed nation by the year 2020, Malaysia needs to restructure its workforce to ensure that middle level workers are highly skilled. Current job environment demands multi-task and skills. Thus, university graduates must be prepared to meet the demand especially in the hospitality industry. The purpose of this study is to identify the hospitality employability skills consist of fifteen elements of employability skills among vocational students in Malaysia. The objective of this study is to identify the level of hospitality employability skills among vocational students. This study also analyzed whether there are significant differences in the competency level of vocational students by gender. The research also identifies the differences of hospitality employability skills by location (rural and urban), examines the determinants of hospitality employability skills among bakery and culinary students separately, identifies differences between perceived importance and competency gained in employability skills among bakery and culinary students and examines the skills that are needed by students for entering the hospitality profession. This research applied quantitative and qualitative methodology. The respondents consist of final year students in bakery and culinary programme. Stratified sampling was used to select students in hospitality programs from 22 vocational colleges in Malaysia. Questionnaires were distributed to eight hundred forty one students in five regions in Malaysia. Interview was also conducted with ten vocational students in central region, Malaysia. Descriptive and inferential statistics such as T- test and multiple regression analysis were used to analyse the quantitative data. The results showed that the level of hospitality employability skills among vocational students in Malaysia were at high level of competent and importance (93.2%). Findings also revealed that male students are more competent in hospitality employability skills compared to female students in vocational colleges. The result also provided evidence that rural students are more competent in hospitality employability skills compared to urban students in vocational colleges. The result found that the competence gained by bakery students in terms of employability skills is lower than the importance perceived by those students. The findings also showed that the competence gained by culinary students in terms of employability skills is lower than the importance perceived by those students.

PENGUASAAN KEMAHIRAN KEBOLEHKERJAAN HOSPITALITI DI KALANGAN PELAJAR VOKASIONAL

ABSTRAK

Malaysia memerlukan tenaga kerja berkemahiran tinggi untuk membantu pertumbuhan industri. Kekerapan perubahan yang mendadak di pasaran kerja dan juga perubahan teknologi, menyebabkan pengeluaran tenaga kerja yang akan datang diharapkan dapat seiring dengan kehendak pasaran ekonomi antarabangsa. Sehubungan itu, Malaysia perlu menstruktur semula pengurusan tenaga kerja, agar menghasilkan kumpulan pekerja peringkat pertengahan yang berkemahiran tinggi, seiring dengan matlamat negara pada tahun 2020. Dewasa ini, persekitaran kerja menuntut pelbagai tugas dan kemahiran, graduan univesiti perlu bersedia untuk memenuhi permintaan industri terutamanya di bidang industri hospitaliti. Tujuan kajian ini dijalankan untuk mengkaji penguasaan kemahiran kebolehkerjaan hospitaliti yang terdiri daripada lima belas kemahiran kebolehkerjaan dalam kalangan pelajar kolej vokasional di Malaysia. Secara terperinci, kajian ini menganalisis tahap kemahiran kerjaya hospitaliti dalam kalangan pelajar vokasional, mengenal pasti sama ada wujud perbezaan dalam kalangan pelajar kolej vokasional mengikut jantina, mengenalpasti perbezaan kemahiran kebolehkerjaan hospitaliti dikalangan pelajar kolej vokasional di kawasan bandar dan luar bandar, menguji kecenderungan kemahiran kebolehkerjaan hospitaliti dikalangan pelajar vokasional kursus bidang bakeri, menguji kecenderungan kemahiran kebolehkerjaan hospitaliti dikalangan pelajar vokasional kursus bidang kulinari, mengenal pasti perbezaan di antara kepentingan dan kompentensi kemahiran kebolehkerjaan hospitaliti dikalangan pelajar kursus bidang bakeri, mengenalpasti perbezaan di antara kepentingan dan kompentensi kemahiran kebolehkerjaan hospitaliti dalam kalangan pelajar kursus bidang kulinari, mengenalpasti kemahiran kebolehkerjaan dalam kalangan pelajar kursus hospitaliti, dan mengenalpasti kemahiran-kemahiran yang diperlukan oleh para pelajar untuk memasuki bidang hospitaliti. Kajian ini mengaplikasikan kaedah kuantitatif dan kualitatif. Kaedah sampel rawak bersrata (stratified) juga digunakan dalam kajian ini iaitu memilih pelajar dalam bidang hospitaliti dari kolej vokasional di Malaysia. Sampel yang dipilih adalah dari kumpulan pelajar tahun akhir kolej vokasional dalam kursus kulinari dan bakeri. Borang soal selidik telah diedarkan kepada 841 orang pelajar di lima zon di Malaysia. Temubual juga dijalankan ke atas 10 orang pelajar vokasional di zon tengah Malaysia. Kajian yang dijalankan ini adalah berbentuk statistik diskriptif dan inferens contohnya Ujian T dan Analisis Regresi Berganda untuk kajian diskriptik. Hasil dapatan kajian menuujukkan tahap kompentensi dan kepentingan kemahiran kebolehkerjaan hospitaliti dalam kalangan pelajar vokasional di Malaysia adalah tinggi sebanyak 93.2%. Dapatan yang diperolehi menunjukkan bahawa pelajar lelaki adalah lebih kompeten dalam kemahiran kebolehkerjaan hospitaliti berbanding pelajar perempuan di kolej-kolej vokasional. Hasil dapatan kajian ini juga memberikan bukti bahawa pelajar luar bandar lebih kompeten dalam kemahiran kebolehkerjaan hospitaliti berbanding pelajar bandar di kolej-kolej vokasional. Selain itu, hasil dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa pelajar kursus bakeri mempunyai jumlah kompentensi kemahiran kebolehkerjaan yang rendah berbanding jumlah kepentingan yang diperolehi oleh semua pelajar. Selain itu, hasil dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa pelajar kursus kulinari juga, mempunyai jumlah

kompentensi kemahiran kebolehkerjaan yang rendah berbanding jumlah kepentingan yang diperolehi oleh semua pelajar.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Originality Literary Work Declaration……...	ii
Abstract……...	iii
Abstrak……	iv
Acknowledgement……...	vi
Table of Contents……	vii
List of Figures……	x
List of Tables……..	xi
List of Appendices……..	xiii
Chapter 1 Introduction	
Overview……	1
Statement of the Problem……	12
Theoretical Framework……..	29
Conceptual Framework……..	30
Research Objectives……	34
Research Questions…….	35
Significance of Study……..	36
Limitation of the Study……...	37
Definition of Terms…….	37
Employability Skills……	40
Communication Skills…….	41
Teamwork Skills…….	43
Problem-solving Skills……	44
Information Technology (IT) Skills……	45
Entrepreneurship Skills……...	46
Numeracy Skills……..	46
Learning how to learn…….	46
Working with others (WWO)…….	47
Initiative and Enterprise Skills……	47
Planning and Organizing Skills……...	48
Self-management Skills……..	48
Learning Skills……	48
Leadership Skills…….	48
Hospitality Industry…….	49
Summary…….	49
Chapter 2 Literature Review	
Introduction…….	50
TVET in developed and developing countries…….	54
TVET in UK…….	54
TVET in Germany……	56
TVET in Korea…….	59
TVET in Malaysia……	61

Introduction of Vocational Education……. 68
Hospitality in Vocational Education……... 75
Defining Skills…… 80
Types of Skills…… 90
Skills needed for Hospitality Industry……. 94
Determinants and Importance of employability skills…… 101
Theories of Employability Skills…… 107
Comparative Employability Skills by Country……... 109
Summary……. 110

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

Introduction……. 111
Epistemology…….... 112
Triangulation……... 115
Research process used in this study…… 118
Research Design…….. 118
Paradigms…… 119
Pragmatism……... 121
Praxis……..... 122
Quantitative Method…… 124
Qualitative Method…….. 128
Population & Sampling……... 230
Quantitative Sampling……. 131
Qualitative Sampling……... 134
Instrumentation…… 135
Quantitative Instrument……... 135
Qualitative Instrument……. 139
Pilot Study……... 140
Reliability of the Instrument……... 142
Validity of the Instrument……... 143
Confirmatory Factor Analysis……. 148
Exploratory Factor Analysis…… 149
Data collection procedures…….. 151
Quantitative data collection……. 152
Qualitative data collection……... 152
Data Analysis…….. 155
Quantitative data analysis…… 155
Descriptive Statistic……. 157
Independent Sample T-Test…… 158
Multiple Linear Regression…… 160
Qualitative data analysis…….. 160
Summary……. 163

Chapter 4 Findings

Introduction…… 164
Profiles of Respondent…… 165
Demographic background……... 165
Descriptive Findings……... 167
Qualitative Analysis of Focus Group Discussion…….. 206
Validity and Reliability…….. 207
Qualitative Findings of Employability…… 208
Theme: Purpose/Skills……. 208
Theme: Assessment……. 210
Theme: Skills expected to gain more employment…. 212
Summary……. 214

Chapter 5 Discussion, Implications and Conclusion

Introduction……. 216
Summary of Findings…….. 217
Discussion of Findings…… 219
Implication of the Study…….. 234
Methodology Implication……... 235
Practical Implication……... 236
Leadership and Management Implication……... 240
Theoretical Implication……... 244
Recommendations of Future Research…… 245
Contribution of Literature……... 251
Contribution of Literature……... 251
Contribution to Academician and Further Researchers…….. 251
Contribution to Authorities of Higher Education…… 252
Contribution to the instrument for further study……. 254
Conclusion…….. 254
References……... 258

LIST OF FIGURES

		Page
Figure 1.1	Theoretical Framework of Core Competencies Development at University……..	30
Figure 1.2	Conceptual framework of the study……	33
Figure 2.1	Common approaches to TVET teacher education in Malaysia……..	67

LIST OF TABLES

		Page
Table 1.1	Terminology relating to employability skills as used in different countries…….	10
Table 1.2	Enrolment at Secondary level by Type of Schools (2012-2014)……...	17
Table 2.1	Some of transformation focus and initiatives by respective TVET agencies……	65
Table 2.2	Malaysia's current TVET policies and practices, issues and challenges, strategies, and recommendations…..	68
Table 2.3	Comparative tables of employability skills by country……	109
Table 3.1	Regions in Malaysia and Vocational Schools……...	132
Table 3.2	Vocational Schools by Hospitality Programs ……..	133
Table 3.3	Interview Samples…….	135
Table 3.4	Likert Scale of the Questionnaire……..	136
Table 3.5	Cronbach alpha of instrument at Vocational Colleges….....	143
Table 3.6	KMO and Barlett's Test Result…….	149
Table 3.7	Frequency and percentage of Students' Response Rate……	152
Table 3.8	Likert Scale of the Questionnaire……..	155
Table 3.9	Interpretation of Mean Score……	156
Table 3.10	Statistical Tools for Quantitative Data Analysis……...	157
Table 3.11	Statistical Tools for Qualitative Data Analysis…….	162
Table 4.1	Respondent's Demographic Profile……..	165
Table 4.2	Interpretation of Mean Score……	168
Table 4.3	Level of Competence in Communication Skills among Vocational Students……..	168
Table 4.4	Level of Competence in Teamwork Skills among Vocational Students……..	169
Table 4.5	Level of Competence in Problem Solving Skills among Vocational Students……..	170
Table 4.6	Level of Competence in Initiative and Enterprise Skills among Vocational Students……..	171
Table 4.7	Level of Competence in Planning and Organizing Skills among Vocational Students……..	172
Table 4.8	Level of Competence in Self-Management Skills among Vocational Students……..	173
Table 4.9	Level of Competence in Learning How to Learn Skills among Vocational Students……..	174
Table 4.10	Level of Competence in Information and Technology Skills among Vocational Students……	175
Table 4.11	Level of Competence in Resource Management Skills among Vocational Students……..	176
Table 4.12	Level of Competence and Importance in Entrepreneurship Skills among Vocational Students…….....	177
Table 4.13	Level of Competence in Basic Skills among Vocational Students……..	178
Table 4.14	Level of Competence in Leadership Skills among Vocational Students……..	179

Table 4.15	Level of Competence in Working with Others Skills among Vocational Students……..	180
Table 4.16	Level of Competence in Ethical and Professional Moral Skills among Vocational Students……..	181
Table 4.17	Level of Competence in Technical and Vocational Skills among Vocational Students…….....	182
Table 4.18	Level of Competence in Hospitality Skills among Vocational Students…….	183
Table 4.19	Summary of Independent T-Test for both group on Skills by Gender……	185
Table 4.20	Summary of Independent T-Test for both group on Skills by rural and urban area……...	191
Table 4.21	Coefficients Model for bakery student ……	198
Table 4.22	Coefficients Model for culinary student…… ….	200
Table 4.23	Paired-sample T-test for the means of competence and importance of employability skills (bakery)…….	203
Table 4.24	Paired-sample T-test for the means of competence and importance of employability skills (culinary)……..	205

LIST OF APPENDICES

	Page
Appendix A……	283
Appendix B……	302
Appendix C……	303
Appendix D……	358

Chapter 1 Introduction

Overview

This chapter introduces the background of the study. The problem statement is highlighted together with the research objectives and research questions. The theoretical framework and the significance of the study are also presented in this chapter. Malaysia needs a high skilled workforce to support the growth of the industry. With dynamically changing job market and progressive technological change, employees are expected to keep abreast of global economics.

In the process of achieving the status of a developed nation by the year 2020, Malaysia needs to restructure its workforce to ensure that middle-level workers are highly skilled. Malaysian future workforce has to be able to cope with the changing nature and demands of works. Future workforce needs to acquire the employability skills required by all industries. Vocational and technical education can play a major role in providing the future workforce with employability skills. The Government would like more students to pursue education in technical and vocational training and be trained and qualified. This field now comprises only 25 percent of the workforce (Eleventh Malaysian Plan, 2016 – 2020). This Plan aims to boost this workforce to 35 percent, at par with academic and professional graduates.

Entering the 21st century, many important changes take place in the society's social life. This is the result of the changes, development, and sophistication of technology from previous times. Information and communications technology have been playing an important role in promoting products to the world market and it, in turn, improves the efficiency of economy. Globalization also speeds up growth of technology and brings changes at work to give impact to skills of individuals. It is anticipated that more works are likely to be generated in areas of information

processes, usage of computers and control systems. The new generation of works requires highly skilled workforce to use new technologies. Works in present times are characterized as change in production, from any amount of high-value production; an increase of workforce emulation; management of information; and extensive restructuring.

According to the U. S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011) and results of Gallup polls (Clifton, 2011), several interesting changes are occurring in the 21st-century workforce. For the first time in our history, the fastest growing segment of the workforce is people of color. The number of women in the workforce is also rising steadily. Secondly, the members of the workforce are working longer into their lives. While more people of color and more women are working than ever before and people are working longer into their lives, growth in the labor force has actually decreased each decade since the 1970's. The average length of time spent with a single employer is decreasing. This equates to more careers in a worker's lifetime than ever before.

For the first time in polling history, people report that, first and foremost, the most important thing in their lives is to have a quality job, one with a steady paycheck and regular working hours totally thirty or more hours per week. Additionally, because the Baby Boomer generation is aging, the labor force is steadily growing older. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projected that from 2006 to 2016, the number of workers ages 55 to 64 will increase by 36.5% while the number of workers who are 65 and older will increase by 81%. Aging of the workforce was echoed by the North Iowa Corridor Economic Development Corporation (2011). When local businesses were asked about how many employees do have in each of the following age ranges. Three areas showed change between 2010 and 2011.

There were decreases in the number of employees in the 19-29 and 30-39 age ranges and growth in the 60-65 age range. All other age ranges remained stable. Because more people of color and more women are joining the workforce workers are working longer, and workers are changing jobs more often, we have a workforce that needs career development for new workers and recurring career development throughout a worker's lifetime.

The on-going changes at the workplace, the work itself and the development of advanced technology surely will require workforce to have advance knowledge in the areas of works, high skills, and positive attitudes. The advancement of new technologies changes the way works are done and brings about a shift of workforce requirement from low skills to workforce being well informed and high skilled (K-Worker).

The current workplace needs workforce with high technical skills as well as ability to relate to others. To overcome such challenges in work environment that always changes, society needs education and training which is at par with the requirements. In view of the current changes at workplace and the work it, current and future generation of workers have to be well trained and technical-vocational education plays a big role in producing workforce needed by the industries.

Technical-vocational education and training (TVET) system are designed to help students become successful workers. Unlike the academic system, TVET system is a system designed with the purpose of fulfilling the manpower demands of the industries by providing needed skills required at workplaces. Human capital is the most important resource for national development. The status of a nation, whether advanced or otherwise, depends on the competencies and skills of its human capital as well as the strength of its value system. (Eleventh Malaysian Plan, 2016 – 2020).

Due to today's business challenging competitive environments, organizations continue to focus on adaptation, cost reduction, increased productivity, new markets, new products and services as a mean to compete and survive in the industry. Organization choices with regard to recruitment and training are largely being driven by these business strategy directions. In this environment, employees need to play proactive roles to be able to support the increased competitiveness, innovation, flexibility and client focus. Organizations are increasingly seeking a more highly skilled workforce where generic and transferable skills are broadly distributed across the organization. There has been broad agreement that all young people need a set of personal attributes and skills that will prepare them for both employment and further learning. It is also recognized that the ongoing employability of individuals is dependent on them having a set of relevant skills, as well as a capacity to learn and how to learn new things.

Today employers seek out for a graduate that has the balance between academic and soft skills. It's no surprise that some students might do not even know what employability skills are all about, they might not even know what the employer expect from them upon their graduation. Some pointed out that, a degree is just a ticket, but how do they translate their academic performance into action when they are working, that is the moment of truth. Some employers underestimated the capability of a fresh graduate since they are so – called fresh blood that entering the workforce with no or little experience. Some mentioned about the incompetency of the fresh graduates, as they are not reliable, lack of creativity and poor communication skills derived from the low self-confident. In general, they are lack of so-called soft skills (Nurita et al., 2004).

A survey, conducted by the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE, 2009), only 58.2 % of the bachelor graduates in 2009 are in the workforce, only 5.0 % further their study, 1.6 % enhancing their skills, another 24.7% unemployed and 10.5 % waiting for job placement. For this particular issue of employability, in July 2009, one seminar had been conducted to review some of the facts and figures regarding the issue.

The education ministry had set specific statement which is 75% of the graduates employed in their relevant field within six months of their graduation in order to produce competent graduates to fulfill national and international man power needs with (MOHE, 2009).

In progressing towards an advanced nation, we will need more high-skilled workers. Therefore, the Government would like more students to pursue the education in technical and vocational training and be trained and qualified. This field now comprises only 25 percent of the workforce. This Plan aims to boost this workforce to 35 percent, at par with academic and professional graduates. For this reason, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) will be strengthened (Eleventh Plan Period, 2016 - 20202). The government will be allocated 1 billion ringgit to the Skills Development Fund, compared with 500 million ringgit in the previous Plan period. Through this program, TVET graduates will have the opportunity to secure high-paying jobs in sectors such as oil and gas, aviation engineering, shipping and automotive (Eleventh Plan Period).

Ministry is trying their best to address the issue. Based on the text by Minister of Higher Education Malaysia recently. The graduates of higher education institutions, being employable means having the qualities needed to maintain employment and progress in the workplace. Employability from the perspective of a higher education institution is therefore about producing graduates who are capable and able, and these

impacts upon all areas of university life. According to Malaysian Eleventh Plan period, TVET diploma graduates accredited by Department of Skill Development (DSD) have limited access to continuing their studies at degree level in the institute of higher education (IHE) due to more emphasis on practical components, different quality assurance mechanism and the perception that these graduates are less academically inclined. On the other hand, TVET graduates accredited by MQA have more accessibility to pursue higher education in IHEs as their curriculums are inclined to the academic track. This has led to unclear TVET articulation. Lack of industry input in curriculum design has resulted in the mismatch of skills required by industry and the skills attained by TVET graduates. Industries demand for work-ready TVET graduates who are competent and multi-skilled.

Thus, the roles of higher education Institution in order to enhance graduates employability embedded into two main components: curriculum and co-curriculum. The fundamental questions to be answered are whether those two components are able to help to develop a strong character of the graduate." The minister pointed out the strategy for co-curriculum such as informal training, entrepreneurship program, Industry partnership, international internship programs and inculcating positive value. In transforming Malaysian educational systems for the 21st century, Ministry of Education Malaysia plays the role in preparing educators, learners, schools, higher educational institution towards first class mentality which is the main aim of The National Higher Education Strategic Plan (NHESP) and the first class mentality workers is characterized as a of human capital that can meet the needs of individual, family, community, nation and the world (Ministry of Higher Education, 2012). Therefore, educational institutions should recognize the important aim of the Ministry of Education Malaysia in order to produce semi-skilled and highly skilled workforce.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) worldwide also has taken steps to produce a high-quality skilled workforce for the future. This is not exceptional for the TVET in Malaysia and 21st century skills are being looked into for that particular reason (Aring, 2011; Bybee & Fuchs, 2006; Daniel & Hultin, 2002; Kechik, 2011; Nwogu, 2011; Ministry of Higher Education, 2012).

Worldwide reports regarding 21st century skills were looking at the issue of developing the competent workforce for the future and they are pointing to education systems, particularly at the higher education institutions since they are the providers of the human capital. Higher education institution held important roles and responsibilities to prepare students to be the workforce for the future especially in surviving the dynamic economic environment (N. M. Triki, 2010). As for TVET, to prepare for 21st century skills, all parties involved in the organization must look at the history of technical and vocational education to create a better future for the direction of TVET in the 21st century. There are many types of research, studies, and conferences related to transforming TVET for 21st century education being done worldwide. The topics raised revolved around the problems and issues faced by TVET institutions such as appropriate skills required to produce successful graduates, the transformation of education, suitable TVET programs, employability, and workforce to fit the global market. Dason, Hamzah, and Udin (2010) have reviewed the paths gone through by Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) in Malaysia. Some of the major problems faced by TVET in Malaysia, including lack of engagement with related industries, lack of educators who have experience in the industries, lack of funds and policy to support TVE, negative impression in TVE, and the curriculum is not effective and flexible were the major problems being discussed.

The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) market has been interesting for major countries over the world as a new consumer market due to the wealth of resources and a huge quantity of people. Meanwhile, ASEAN has concern with group cohesiveness of 10 countries in the Southeast Asia region; Thai, Laos, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Philippine, Brunei, Myanmar, Cambodia and Vietnam. This concern stems from negotiation power and sharing resource within the region. Moreover, these countries committed to the ASEAN Community in 2015 and aim to create a strong socio-culture community, economic community, and security community.

In the ASEAN economic community (AEC), the ASEAN Summits have considered and approved the ASEAN single market concept. Under this program, ten countries can move goods, service, capital and skilled workers without inter-trade barriers, such as tariffs and regulations. This agreement will begin in 2020 and would strongly affect Thai workers if the government is not prepared to educate and fulfill people capacity, especially in 7 key professional occupations; doctors, engineers, nurses, architects, accountants, dentists, and surveyors that are the primary job mobility group.

The government, education ministry and academic institutes must concern the readiness of new graduates for AEC. Each year many students graduate from private and public academic institutes. A few of them cannot seek jobs. Thus, the education institutes play important roles in the labor market (Dekker, Grip, & Heijke, 2002) for guiding students on how to apply for job positions and plan their individual career roadmap.

Most new graduate applicants are over-educated for their first jobs according to companies (Dekker, Grip, & Heijke, 2002). However, the qualities of graduates

have been a critical point. Not only is academic knowledge important, but also employability skill and job mobility. This research aims to explore the level of student employability skill, and identify factors that influence international job mobility. The research is divided into 5 parts. The first part is the introduction, the second part is a literature review, the third part describes the methodology, the fourth part presents the findings and the last part is a conclusion and discussion section.

The policy makers are still making plans to increase graduate's skills therefore they needs to enhance employability skills among graduates in order to meet the need of the current workforce. The key player in enhancing employability is the Higher education Institutions and their responsibility to identify how they can enhance skills of their future employees. Generic skills are the key term used as employability skills in most countries, but what is meant by this term varies in different countries. Before moving on, it is necessary to explore some definitions of employability and the main interrelated tenets explicitly inherent in this concept. The UK, France, Germany, Australia and the USA have been promoting the concept of employability and developing skills categories since the 1980s. The USA, Australia and the UK use the following descriptive words – 'core', 'generic', and 'key' – skills that are considered essential for employability.

Table 1.1 gives an example of the categorization used by other countries and terminology used in relation to employability skills. It provides a researcher with an interesting linguistic perspective for a discourse analysis study relating to the expectations, priority, and values that different countries place on employability skills. However, this is outside the remit of this research.

Table 1.1
Terminology relating to employability skills as used in different countries

Country	Term used
United Kingdom	Core skills, key skills, common skills
New Zealand	Essential skills
Australia	Key competencies, employability skills, generic skills
Canada	Employability skills
United states	Basic skills, workplace know-how, necessary skills
Singapore	Critical enabling skills
France	Transferable skills
Germany	Key qualifications
Switzerland	Trans-disciplinary goals
Denmark	Process independent qualifications

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research (2003)

Educational challenges are closely intertwined with the economic, political, social, cultural and religious agenda of any nation. Socially and culturally, there is an expectation for improvement in living conditions offered and created by higher levels of education of the masses. As economic activities change from an agricultural mode to that of manufacturing, industrial and digital, so too are their changes in the types of employability skills and competencies required. This ignited a constant challenge on the relevance of education. Many nations have given simultaneous emphasis to adult education and to universal education for the young, both emphasizing on basic literacy. As the level of education is raised and as life expectancy increases, the question of employability becomes all the more important; transforming the importance of education beyond basic literacy alone.

Recently, employability and the creation of a knowledge-based economy have become fundamental concerns in many countries, including Malaysia. Realizing the need to achieve a high-income economy, the Malaysian Government through its Eleventh Malaysia Plan (2016-2020) is transforming TVET by enabling industry-led approach is crucial to produce skills human capital that meet the industry demand and

support the migration of all economic sectors towards knowledge intensive activities, in line with the aspiration to become a high income nation by 2020. It also focuses on labor market reforms that aim to develop the country's human capital, with special emphasis on lifelong learning and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) as a means to raise the overall quality of the workforce by enhancing skills that have immediate applicability in the labor market. TVET is now commonly considered a mainstream education option, and many high-income countries adopt a 'dual pathway' model of education – a model that Malaysia plans to emulate as well. Thus, improving the availability, access and quality of lifelong learning through TVET is considered equally important to the formal academic pathway in the country.

The concept of lifelong learning, also a nascent focus for many countries, is one that has solid connections to TVET. In Malaysia, the various programs conducted at certificate and diploma levels are widely recognized as formal lifelong learning programs, and this is the main focus for the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) to begin acculturating lifelong learning in the Malaysian society. The Ministry is thus proposing the publication of a Blueprint on Lifelong Learning for the country; an effort that will greatly involve TVET programmes and providers.

In this study, the researcher focused on the field of hospitality because there is a limited number of studies regarding employability skills in hospitality programs in Malaysia such as effectiveness, perceptions of stakeholders regarding hospitality programs, standards and quality of the programs, and methods used in the programs. Additionally, there is a concern regarding the progress and impact of employability skills programs to improve the skills of the workforce and minimize unemployment.

Statement of the Problem

Malaysian labor force increased from 9.6 million in 2000 to 11.3 million in 2005 and by 2010 it is expected to reach 12.4 million. Among all employment sectors in Malaysia, manufacturing sector will experience the largest increment in employment. More people will be employed in manufacturing sector compared to other sectors. It is estimated that by 2010, 30% of the employment will be in manufacturing. Unemployment rate in Malaysia has been quite steady. It was 3.1% in 2000, 3.5% in 2005 and it is expected to remain at 3.5% in 2010. The Economic Planning Unit of Malaysia (EPU) reported that the number of workers increased at an average of 3.2% a year, from 9.6 million in 2000 to 10.5 million workers in 2003. An estimate of manpower requirement in industrial sector, especially in manufacturing was 2.8 million in 2003. This sector renders 270,700 opportunities of new works as a result of growth of domestic industry. This amount to average 3.4% in a year and in 2003 becoming 27.9% for entire work sectors. Unemployment is one of the problem faced by many countries. The International Labor Organization reported that there were about 6.67% unemployment rate in United States, 5.24% in Germany, 7.3% in United Kingdom and 5.72% in Australia. Meanwhile in Malaysia, the unemployment rate was about 3.22%. This report was based on unemployment rate in 2014 (International Labor Organization, 2014). According to Department of Statistics Malaysia, the unemployment rate in Malaysia has increased 0.3 percent in October 2014 compared to September the same year. This percentage involved 378,200 labor force that were unemployed during the Labor Force Survey conducted by Department of Statistics Malaysia (The Office of Chief Statistician Malaysia, 2014). The report define ‘labor force’ as people aged between 10 15 to 64 years and are either employed or unemployed during the survey being conducted and the ‘unemployment rate’ as the

proportion of unemployed population to the total population in labor force which measures the percentage of unemployed population in the labor force (The Office of Chief Statistician Malaysia, 2014).

In the Malaysian context, a wide range of empirical studies have documented the lack of soft skills from the employment perspective. Nurita et al., (2004) pointed out that local graduates are generally well-trained in their areas of specialization but lack soft skills. The lack of personal and interpersonal competencies, including thinking skills, was presented in an employable skill study done by Norman Mohd Dali (2005). Similarly, studies have pointed out that the lack of soft skills is one of the main reasons for graduate unemployment; for example, Knir (2006) pointed out that the lack of both technical knowhow and generic skills led to unemployment. A Malaysian government survey has shown that poor English and communication skills (The Star Malaysia, 2005) and poor English proficiency resulted in 30,000 local graduates taking up casual and temporary work (New Strait Times, 2005). It was also found that significant numbers of graduates are without appropriate skills and right attitudes (Saidfudin, 2008). Furthermore, a survey on human resource personnel and bosses by JobStreet.Com (a Malaysian employment agency) in 2005 indicated a lack of soft skills resulting in unemployed graduates. Also, it was recorded that in the last few years the unemployment rate amongst the local graduates was relatively high (Knir, 2006), and it was estimated that about 70% of the graduates from public universities and institutions of higher learning are still unemployed, as compared to 34% of the foreign graduates and 26% of the local private graduates (Suresh, 2006).

The issue of unemployment among graduates raises the key question of what went wrong with higher education, in particular the approach undertaken in higher education planning and its teaching and learning. Of course, there are many reasons or

factors associated with the issue of unemployment. Focusing on educational planning approaches will enable the education providers to be better prepared and provide viable educational programs capable of addressing the issue of unemployment. In line with this, there was a call for greater opportunity for learning soft skills and the fusion of both domains of specific knowledge and generic skills in the Ninth Malaysia Plan (Jailani et al., 2005). Hence, the introduction of the seven soft skill dimensions and the teaching and learning of soft skills have become compulsory for all higher education institutions (MoHE, 2005) and that higher education should prepare students for future employment. Further studies concern with transforming TVET towards 21st century. The main concern is the challenges faced by students and teachers in the 21st century education. Hassan (2010) suggested that the great challenge to the TVET should be addressed is to ensure to achieve developed nation status in 2020. It can be seen that the foundation of vocational education in Malaysia has been built up to enable educators to plan and move towards the goal. However, the challenge in the coming years, especially in the economic crisis facing the country, vocational educator should have the competitive and sensitive to the changes occurring around it (Hassan, 2010). This shows that TVET are facing great challenge in moving towards 21st century because of the dynamic economic growth. To overcome these challenges, previous studies and reports regarding TVET also have appointed several appropriate 21st century skills that focused on strengthening TVET. The skills comprised of accountability and adaptability, communication skills, creativity and intellectual curiosity, critical thinking and systems thinking, information and media literacy skills, and interpersonal and collaborative skills, flexibility, lifelong learning, practical skills, and employability (Hassan, 2010; Maclean & Pavlova, 2011; Wang, 2012).

Aring (2011) revealed major issues that were raised regarding youth development in TVET which first highlighted young people's biggest concern are access to jobs and physical security. Second, young people are afraid of being unemployed because of their lacking skills that are valued in global and local economic which will lead to problems to economic growth, jobs and income. Third, the perception of the term vocational in different language and culture, where vocational tends to have negative connotations. This issue also supported by Dason, Hamzah and Udin (2010) which also highlighted that collaboration between industries and education that little history of collaboration among employers or between employers and education in most developing countries. This is supported by Triki (2010). Finally, Aring (2011) suggested that which also supported by Dason et al., (2010) highlighted that the curricular are often out of date, narrow, not effective and not flexible. Furthermore, skills standards that reflect the industrial sector's current and future skill needs were not available between industries and education sectors. These issues of workforce of today and in the past should not be taken easily since the economic growth and demands are ever changing (Judy & D'Amico, 1997; Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2012).

As one way to address the issues mentioned earlier, Ministry of Higher Education has adopted a study done by (Mohamad & Hamzah, 2011) regarding the Generic Student Attributes (GSA). There are four attributes that students should have; Academic attributes, Personality Management attributes, Exploration attributes and finally Connectivity attributes. These four attributes have their own elements. The Academic attributed consist of four elements that are academic performance, good degree classification, college experiences and job knowledge on the discipline of study. The Personality Management attributes comprise of positive attitude,

responsibility, adaptability, leadership, and altruism as the elements of the attribute. Imaginative, innovative and critical and creative thinking are the elements for the Exploration attributes. The Connectivity attributes are the final attributes that consist of four elements of attributes which are communication, technology integration, team working and commercial awareness. The Employability Attributes Framework (EAF) in the National Graduate Employability Blueprint 2012-2017 was adopted by the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2012). The blueprint recommends that the graduate employability attribute is important for all graduates to secure and should be nurtured and developed across the higher learning institutions experience (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2012).

Malaysia needs high skilled workforce to support growth of the industry. The result of Asian Development Bank (ADB) study on industrial workers in several countries (including Malaysia), revealed that graduates of TVE system have yet to achieve the standard desired by industries, either in terms of job quality or preparation for work. Industries, especially consumers of TVE system, were quite unhappy with graduates of TVE mainly in the aspect of personal quality. Other studies mentioned that discontentment was due to lack of workers having employability skills desired by the employers. With dynamically changing job market and progressive technological change, employees are expected to keep abreast of global economics. In view of all this, implementation of TVE system as workforce provider deserves to be evaluated.

To be recognized as an economically developed country by 2020, Malaysia needs to restructure its workforce structure. Malaysia needs to increase its workforce by having highly skilled workers at the middle level. Malaysian future workforce has to be able to cope with the changing nature and demands of works. Above all, our future workforce has to have the employability skills required by all industries.

Vocational and technical education can play a major role in providing the future workforce with employability skills. Thus, a study was needed to identify the extent of employability skills possessed by students from technical and vocational colleges in Malaysia. In progressing towards an advanced nation, we will need more high-skilled workers. The Government would like more students to pursue an education in technical and vocational training and be trained and qualified. This field now comprises only 25 percent of the workforce (Eleventh Malaysian Plan, 2016 – 2020). This Plan aims to boost this workforce to 35 percent, at par with academic and professional graduates. Therefore the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) will be strengthened.

Table 1.2
Enrolment at Secondary level by Type of Schools (2012-2014)

Type of schools	2012	2013	2014
Regular	2,087,689	2,100,737	2,035,649
Fully Residential	37,202	39,069	38,642
Religious	39,088	39,283	38,975
Technical	10,777	9,862	4,856
Vocational	38,756	31,055	2,301
Special Education	644	701	789
Special Model	11,709	11,868	11,669
Sports	850	1,028	1,184
Arts	533	535	644
Special Model (K9)	121	233	792
Government Aided Religious Schools	53,855	61,818	64,508
Bimbingan Jalinan Kasih	0	0	33
Vocational College	0	0	34,579
Total	2,281,224	2,296,189	2,234,621

Source: Educational and Research Division (EMIS: Data as of 31 January 2014)

In developing these skills, there is a part to be played by students, higher education, employers and policymakers. As one of the key player in enhancing employability, the institutions of higher learning need to identify how they can enhance skills of their students. The Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) in Malaysia has aggressively embarked on a mission to take in students and enhance their soft skills development in order to produce high-quality human capital,

knowledgeable, competitive, has the creative and innovative features and move in line with industry requirements and social needs of the country. These soft skills such as human relations skills, communication skills, ethical behavior skills and cognitive skills are the attributes that being considered by employers when reviewing job applicants (Hamid, 2009).

A survey undertaken in 2013 covering final year students who have successfully completed their Industrial Training program was taken to evaluate the employer perspective on the four elements of employment skills based on the generic student attributes (GSA) established by MOHE such as communication skills, teamwork skills, critical thinking and long life learning. Evaluation of the performance output generally categorized on the generic skills, give an indication on the feedback and perception on industrial training by the host organizations and students.

The findings of some developed countries have also shown the importance of skills "employability" on an employee from the employer's perspective. For example, in Britain, there was an increase in the skill requirements of "employability" of the employer for example from 10 % in 2006 to 17 % in 2010 (Green, 2011). The study also lists out the skills of employability on an employee of the perspective employer where the employee will have a variety of skills. Most employers now require employees who not only have technical skills but also require skill "employability" to improve a company's productivity and competitiveness. They will be able to adapt to all types of work and versatility.

Every employer is looking for a specific set of skills from job-seekers that match the skills necessary to perform a particular job. But beyond these job-specific technical skills, certain skills are nearly universally sought by employers. The good news is that most job-seekers possess these skills to some extent. The better news is

that job-seekers with weaknesses in these areas can improve their skills through training, professional development, or obtain coaching/mentoring from someone who understands these skills. The best news is that once understand the skills and characteristics that most employers seek, it can tailor the job-search communication, resume, cover letter, and interview language to showcase how well is the background aligns with common employer requirements. Numerous studies have identified these critical employability skills, sometimes referred to as "soft skills." It have distilled the skills from these many studies into this list of skills most frequently mentioned. It also included sample verbiage describing each skill; job-seekers can adapt this verbiage to their own resumes, cover letters, and interview talking points (Randall Hansen & Hansen, 2010).

In the budget 2015, Malaysian Prime Minister has pointed out that economic planning and policies of a country need to be adjusted according to the developments and challenges in the domestic and external environment. Hence, to remain resilient and competitive, Malaysia must move to an economy based on knowledge, high skills, expertise, creativity and innovation. Currently, human resource is among the key factors contributing to the prosperity of a nation. Wealth creation is no longer solely dependent on resources such as petroleum, oil palm or minerals but also includes ideas, creativity and innovation as well as people's skills including the invention of new products which are capable of driving economic growth and nurturing new entrepreneurs. Consistent with the people's economy, it is the Government's aspiration to increase the component of wages to GDP from 34% currently to 40% by 2020. By 2020, at least 46% of jobs will require technical and vocational qualifications. For this, the Government will increase the student intake in vocational and community colleges through the Vocational and Technical Transformation program and upgrade colleges.

For this purpose, the Government allocates RM1.2 billion. Currently, applications for entry into Technical and Vocational Training (TEVT) programs received by the Ministry of Education far exceed the capacity of 20,000 places. To open up more opportunities in this field, the Government will allocate RM100 million immediately to Ministry of Education for 10,000 placements in technical and vocational private colleges. Further, RM50 million will be allocated to MARA to implement TEVT programs.

In today's modern society, there has been a growing interest in the concept of competence and competencies in the areas of education, human resource management, and training and professional development. In recognition of the importance of competency for an effective work performance, a competency-based training, Malaysia Skills Certification, a skill training program has also been introduced by the Malaysian government in order to give the potential workers and exposure to the world of vocational education (Ramlee & Rohana, 2013). Further, the Department of Skills and Development (Ministry of Human Resources) and Ministry of Education Malaysia has established the skill standards development project which is called National Occupational Skill Standards (NOSS) that defines the employment level as well as essential competency level need to be fulfilled by employees in the industry. Hospitality and tourism is one of the sectors listed in the NOSS directory pertaining skills profession related to Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET). Sub sector that is related specifically to culinary art area is the kitchen management sector. These skill standards have been developed through job analysis procedure in order to provide guidance for workers with an ideal career pathway (NOSS Development Guideline, 2012).

Accordingly, Shahrim Karim, Chua & Hamdin (2009) stated that culinary tourism has the potential to attract international travelers who are seeking for culinary pleasures. Thus, culinary tourism certainly presents a promising needs and demands for employment of competent, well-prepared, dedicated Chefs, administrators and managers in the areas of hotels, food service, restaurant, food manufacturers, catering and hospitality-related fields who could work together in providing the best food and services for guests and consumers (Rozila & Noor Azimin, 2011).

It is important for vocational colleges to prepare graduates that meet the required skills for employability. Such skills might vary based on societal needs. Thus, this research is conducted to identify the most required or demanded soft skills for employability in hospitality field. Indirectly, it will also help the educators to cognize the required soft skills in the particular hospitality field and prepare the students to face the challenges in the industry. In addition, Boyatzis (1982) described competency as important features of a person that determines his or her outstanding performance. Past studies on hospitality competencies discovered hospitality graduates are still lacking in certain skills as required by the industry. Chi and Gursoy (2009) relates globalization as one key contributor to the fast growth and changes of the hotel industry worldwide. Moreover, transformations in world economies, technologies and humanities are other contributors to the constants changes in competencies for the hotel sector (Jauhari, 2006; Whitelaw et al., 2009). Consequently, these changes have produced challenges for hospitality education providers to upkeep with the industry's need. In order for hospitality institutional education to keep pace with these changes, a continuous need to determine the current hospitality competencies is inevitable. The problem statements are pointed out, for example the current job environment demands multi task and skills that university graduate must prepared to be able to meet demand

(World Bank 2006, Bennet et al., 2004 & Hassan Said, 2003). The university also is failing to deliver sufficient graduates with the right portfolio of skills (ACCI, 2005; Morshidi, 2004 & Chen, 2000). In other study, employers complained that the university graduates in Malaysia and Indonesia are lack of core competencies (Zalizan Mohd Jelas et al., 2006 & Brodjonegoro, 2003). Besides that, there is a mismatch between the needs of current job markets and those acquired by students at university (UNESCO, 2006 & Zalizan Mohd Jelas et al., 2006).

Currently, employability is a rising problem among graduates worldwide. Several factors have been identified as factors towards unemployed graduates. Firstly, in terms of the graduate's employability skills and abilities competency. Most employers complain about the lack of various graduate's skills. According to Kathleen (2005), the employers in America are not satisfied with the job applicants, especially from technical graduates. This problems occurred mainly because the applicants do not have enough non-technical skills. Accordingly, the similar problem also exists in Malaysia. Rahmah, Ishak, and Wei Sieng (2011) mentioned that graduates are found to be lacking in employability skills, and have low performance in the work place. Furthermore, it has been acknowledged by the general consensus of Malaysian employers that Malaysian graduates lack the 'soft skills' although are well trained in their areas of specialization (Nurita, Shaharudin, Ainon, 2004). Furthermore, the National Graduate Employability Blueprint (2012-2017) also pointed out that GSA (Generic Student Attribute) is lacking among fresh graduates with communication skill contributed 55.8% of the problem. This situation accumulated to the extent that more than half of these graduates are still unemployed due to the lacking of employability skills (Husman, 2005).

The second factor that contributes to the unemployment of graduates is the supply of graduates from HEIs exceeded the number of job vacancies in the workforce market. This situation created an imbalance in term of the workforce supply and demand. According to Salina and friends (2011), some graduate employees only managed to get jobs that were below their qualifications while others fail to find work at all. They further mentioned that as many as 30,000 graduates only managed to get casual or temporary work that was below their qualifications, mainly because of their lack of English.

However, Aida, Norailis, and Rozaini (2015) mentioned that the real issue in Malaysia is not whether graduates are better or worse in absolute terms than they were in its previous years. They stressed that the real issue is more towards the integration of new graduates as employees into an organization and their ability to contribute effectively. This is in line with the observation by Pillai (2009) that pointed out that most complaints from industry about graduates not being ready for the workplace is not just unique to Malaysia (Sirat et al., 2008), but is in fact a global phenomenon (Teichler, 1999).

Malaysia is confronted with an unemployment issue among university graduates. By initiating employability skills training programs, the government has attempted to strengthen graduates' skills so they are able to secure professional positions. However, there is a lack of assessment and evaluation studies with respect to local employability skills training programs for helping unemployed university graduates. The accountability, capability, and efficacy of training programs have not been fully investigated.

Present employers at the national and global economies tend to recruit graduates with high soft skills competencies. As stated by Winterbotham et al., (2001), overall employer are less demanding of academic excellence and technical skills, and considers them trainable if candidates are able to demonstrate positive attributes and soft skills. For many employers, the weaknesses of graduate soft skills are observable prior screening process, interview or selection sessions that is based on candidate physical appearances, aptitudes ability, communication and other personal talents. Such examples are dress code, appearances, conversation, confidence, motivation, flexibility, positive gesture, mannerisms and resourcefulness (Devins & Hogarth, 2005; Newton et al., 2005; Bunt et al., 2005; Taylor, 2005). In United Kingdom, one-fifth of the reported vacancies could not be filled due to lack of applicants' soft skills (Learning and Skills Council- LSC, 2003).

While in Malaysia, 70 percent graduates are unemployed within 6 months of graduation due to the same reason (Suresh, 2006). Many scholars argue that graduates leave universities without sufficient soft skills and understanding which are necessary to succeed in the working world (Singh & Singh, 2008; Kamal, 2006; Abdul Rahim, 2000; Mohd Sobri, 1990). In Malaysia, there is a profusion of evidence of high graduate unemployment since many graduates are found lacking of what are needed to acquire and to maintain their jobs. The number has growth to a total of 385,800 in June 2009 (MOHE, 2009). These findings show that Malaysian graduates are unemployed not because they are unintelligent but rather because most of them lack soft-skills (Singh & Singh 2008). General consensus among Malaysian employers indicates that Malaysian graduates are well trained in their areas of specialization but unfortunately they lack the 'soft skills', such as communication, problem solving, interpersonal and the ability to be flexible (Nurita et al., 2004; Suresh, 2006; Mohamad

Sattar et al., 2009; Nur Atiqah et al., 2006). Due to the incapacitation of graduate soft skills, the Higher Education Institution (HEI) has come under intense pressure to equip students with more than just academic skills (Abdul Rahim, 2000). A number of reports issued by employers have urged universities to make more explicit efforts to develop the key, core, transferable, soft, employable and generic skills needed in many types of employment (Singh & Singh, 2008). This has led the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (MOHE) to introduce eight learning outcomes for non-curricular activities at university to nurture employability skills among graduates. In March 2009, the government also took initiative to establish the Graduate Employability Management Scheme (GEMS) to equip unemployed graduates with commercially useful skills and experiences that would enhance their employment opportunities.

The high number of graduate unemployment has raised several questions to be investigated. In this article, the main question to be explored is whether the graduates from universities or other institutions are employable based on the current patterns of job demand via electronic advertisement. This question will be answered based on four criteria: the qualification, academic score, experience and specific soft skills. The major point to ponder is whether the current graduate characteristics are able to fulfil the requirement of employers in the job advertised.

It is a well-known fact that productivity, growth and economic well-being are all related to human capital. So the corporates, industries and in general employers want to invest only in good human capital or on efficient workers who possess good skills and competencies along with positive attitude so as to be productive during employment The issues of human capital and employability are gaining focus among issues of the workforce all over the world. The experience of the advanced countries about economic growth and productivity is also due to technological innovations and

qualitative improvements in the organizational and production methods as explained by Myent (1965). The famous economists and Nobel Laureates of 1960's in the field of economics, Schultz and Becker have also explained the similar concerns in their researches. Schultz (1961, 1963) has defined human capital as an important element for upgrading company's performance and improving the productivity of employees and sustainability. Gary. S. Becker (1964) envisaged the relationship of the economy, productivity, employability with skills and knowledge. From substantial studies it became evident that the well-being of people is different due to other less tangible factors like knowledge, skills, and education. Thus, economic inequality is related to training and skill requirement and is a must for efficient and productive output, earnings and employability.

The need for research in this area is imperative not only for contributing to the field of knowledge, but also developing human resources and the workforce of Malaysia. Existing local research and studies are focused mainly on the identification of the components of employability skills rather than assessment and evaluation studies on local employability skills programs.

Other researchers, such as Bakar and Hanafi (2007) and Omar, Bakar, and Mat Rashid (2012), conducted a study on employability skills elements of technical and vocational students in the Malaysian technical training institutes. The studies assessed the level of employability skills of students, the acquisition of employability skills, and the differences in employability skills level by gender and students' majors.

Other studies, conducted by Yusof et al., (2004) also Othman, Sulaiman, Masrom, and Buntat (2009), assessed employability skills components, such as problem-solving and decision-making skills. Mutet al., (2004) assessed the problem-based learning method as a viable option of instructional method for engineering

students. Such research has revealed the importance of employability skills and its components to assist recent graduates secure employment.

However, they did not conduct empirical studies with respect to employability skills for hospitality programs. There is a gap of studies that address employability skills hospitality programs to prepare recent graduates with essential knowledge and skills before entering the job market and securing a job. In the world of work, policy makers, educators, parents, employers, and recent graduates seem perplexed about the direction for employability skills in hospitality programs. They are concerned about the effectiveness of employability hospitality programs in producing high skilled workers who are equipped with the most commercially relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes for targeted job positions. Further, they are concerned about the challenges graduates face in the global job market if hospitality programs did not fulfill their objectives and expectations to improve the skills of the workforce and minimize unemployment. There is a critical need, therefore, to investigate the development of hospitality employability skills in vocational colleges in Malaysia.

In the working environment, technical skills are referred to as the procedure, technique or methods of carry out specialized or practical tasks that can be easily measured and quantified. The training of such skills in TVE graduates is easier in contrast to employability skills, which are normally referred to as core skills, generic skills or nontechnical skills. These skills are not easily taught in schools although they are highly important for the 21st century workforce (Roselina, 2009). These skills can be grouped into three (3) main categories such as interpersonal skills, problem solving and decision making skills. Technical skills and employability skills complement each other. Similarly Spencer & Spencer (Ali et al., 2012) stated that superior performers possess both specialized technical skills and generic employability skills.

In the world of work technical skills are 'hard skills' related to an organization or industry. For instance machine operation, computer protocols, safety standards to mention but a few. In the 21st century workforce employability skill is very important (Pulko & Samir, 2003). Employability skills complement the technical skills in order to fulfil a vital role of shaping individuals life (Schulz, 2008). Employability skills are skills that are supposed to be acquired by everybody in the industry. Industrial employers agreed that employability skill is crucial for their employees to be outstanding in their chosen occupation (Soo & Jumma'ayah, 2001). According to Ramlee (2002) some graduates of TVE usually master their technical skills but employers normally feel dissatisfied of their employees when it comes to employability skills because they lacked motivational skills, communication skills, interpersonal skills, critical thinking, and problem solving and entrepreneurship skill. Syed Hussain Ali et al., (2010) expressed that TVE graduates could not fulfil the needs and requirements of the employers because TVE curriculum is designed to prepare the graduates with basic knowledge and the practical skills acquisition, but the TVE graduates lack the skills and experience required by the employers (industries) in order to meet up with the demand of the 21st century workforce.

Mohamed and Mohd (2005) stated in their study that TVE graduates perception on the relevance of the content of their course with employability skills was low which they felt the content of course did not instill enough employability skills to them. According to Shere & Eadie (Kathleen, 2005) employability skills are not job specific, but are skills which cut across all industries and all jobs from entry level to the top management level.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework was mainly developed by referring to the model of Core Competencies Development at Malaysian university by Jelas et al. (2006), Key Skills (QCA, 2002), Skills Development by Bennet et al. (2000) and Key competencies (Mayer Committee, 1992). The dependent variables are the students' perceived competence in employability skills. These employability skills are categorized under fifteen major components based on Mayer Key Competencies Model: Communication Skills, Teamwork Skills, Problem-solving Skills, Initiative and enterprise Skills, Planning and organizing Skills, Self-management Skills, Learning Skills, Technology Skills, Leadership Skills and Entrepreneurship Skills also closely to that developed by Jelas and Azman (2005). The generic skill set it will consider to consist of ten skills: communication, numeracy, IT, learning how to learn, problem solving, working with others, and subject-specific competencies (Jelas & Azman, 2005; Bennett et al., 2000; Cornford, 1999). The justification of using the model is by the reason that the model is in line with graduate standard of competency as stated in MQF (2005). The study explored the manner of the employability skills carried out in the classroom to provide students with employability skills for their life after graduate from vocational college in order to become responsible members in society. The research conceptual framework is developed to picture out the main focus of the study to obtained research objectives as listed in next parts. Both quantitative and qualitative data were triangulated to gain the real picture of employability skills development in the classroom according to student perceptions. The theoretical framework of core competencies development comprised of three main areas; curriculum content, core competencies and outcome. The model illustrates that outcomes of higher education articulates the importance of nurturing students to become a good citizens, employable

employee and lifelong learner. Curriculum content of higher education aims to nurture each student to be prepared by the core competencies.

The students then go through a broad range of practices continually and experiences to develop skills, knowledge and values (lifelong learning) that will need for working at workplace and for continue their employability and then benefit other society members (good citizenship).

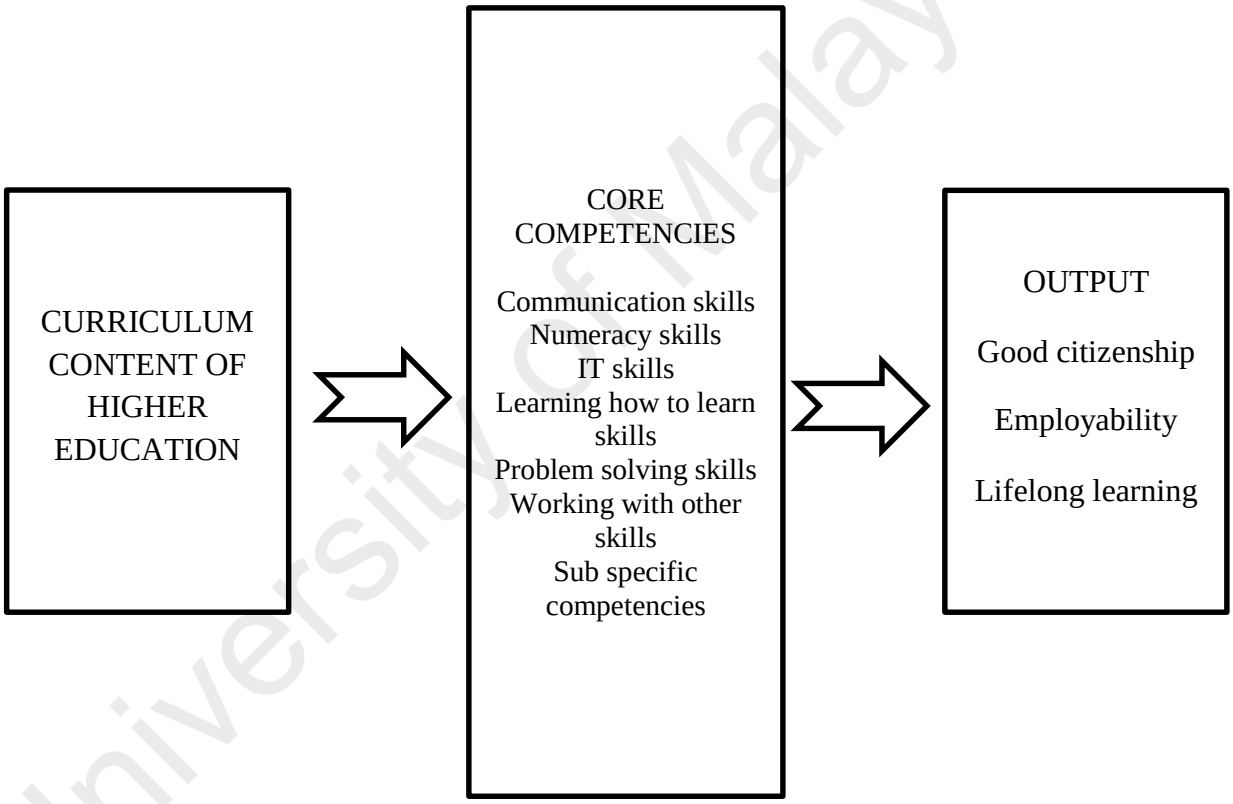

Figure 1.1. Theoretical Framework of Core Competencies Development at University. (Jelas et al., 2006; Bennet et al., 2000; QCA, 2002; Mayer Committee, 1992)

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework as a visual or written product, one that explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied the key factors, concepts, or variables and the presumed relationships among them (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The most important thing to understand about conceptual framework is that it is

primarily a model of what is out there that plan to study, and of what is going on with these things and why as mentioned by Cumming and Maxwell (2004).

The objectives of the research is to explore the development of employability skills among vocational students in Malaysia. The employability skills consist of fifteen skills (Communication Skills, Teamwork Skills, Problem-solving Skills, Initiative and enterprise Skills, Planning and organizing Skills, Self-management Skills, Learning Skills, Technology Skills, Entrepreneurship Skills, Leadership Skills, Basic Skills, Learning how to learn, Working with others, Ethical & professional moral, Technical & vocational skills). The employability skills were raised based on literature review and the current purpose of programs in many countries in ASIA and Europe. According to Jelas et al., (2006), the purpose of the program is not only to teach knowledge and skills, but to ensure that opportunities for students to demonstrate their skills and capability continually even after they graduate from university.

The process of this research would be done by using a set of questionnaire and a focused group discussion. The questionnaire contains fifteen employability skills: Communication Skills, Teamwork Skills, Problem-solving Skills, Initiative and enterprise Skills, Planning and organizing Skills, Self-management Skills, Learning Skills, Technology Skills, Entrepreneurship Skills, Leadership Skills, Basic Skills, Learning how to learn, Working with others, Ethical & professional moral, Technical & Vocational skills. The framework of the study is illustrated in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2 shows the conceptual framework for the study. The dependent variables are the students' perceived competence in employability skills. These employability skills are categorized under fifteen major components based on Mayer Key Competencies model: Communication Skills, Teamwork Skills, Problem-solving Skills, Initiative and enterprise Skills, Planning and organizing Skills, Self-

management Skills, Learning Skills, Technology Skills, Leadership Skills and Entrepreneurship Skills also closely to that developed by Jelas and Azman (2005). The generic skill set it will consider to consist of ten skills: communication, numeracy, IT, learning how to learn, problem solving, working with others, and subject-specific competencies (Jelas & Azman, 2005; Bennett et al., 2000; Cornford, 1999). The major fifteen of dependent variables consists of Communication Skills, Teamwork Skills, Problem-solving Skills, Initiative and enterprise Skills, Planning and organizing Skills, Self-management Skills, Learning Skills, Technology Skills, Entrepreneurship Skills, Leadership Skills, Basic Skills, Learning how to learn, Working with others, Ethical & professional moral, Technical & vocational skills. The independent variables investigated are the students' factors toward employability skills, which comprise Individual factors, Household level factors, School level factors and Environmental level factors.

The justification of using the model is the reason that the model is in line with the graduate standard of competency as stated in Malaysian Qualifications Framework, MQF (2005). The study explored the manner of the employability skills carried out in the classroom to provide students with employability skills for their life after graduating from vocational college in order to become responsible members of society. The research conceptual framework is developed to picture out the main focus of the study to obtained research objectives as listed in next parts. Both quantitative and qualitative data were triangulated to gain the real picture of employability skills development in the classroom according to student perceptions.

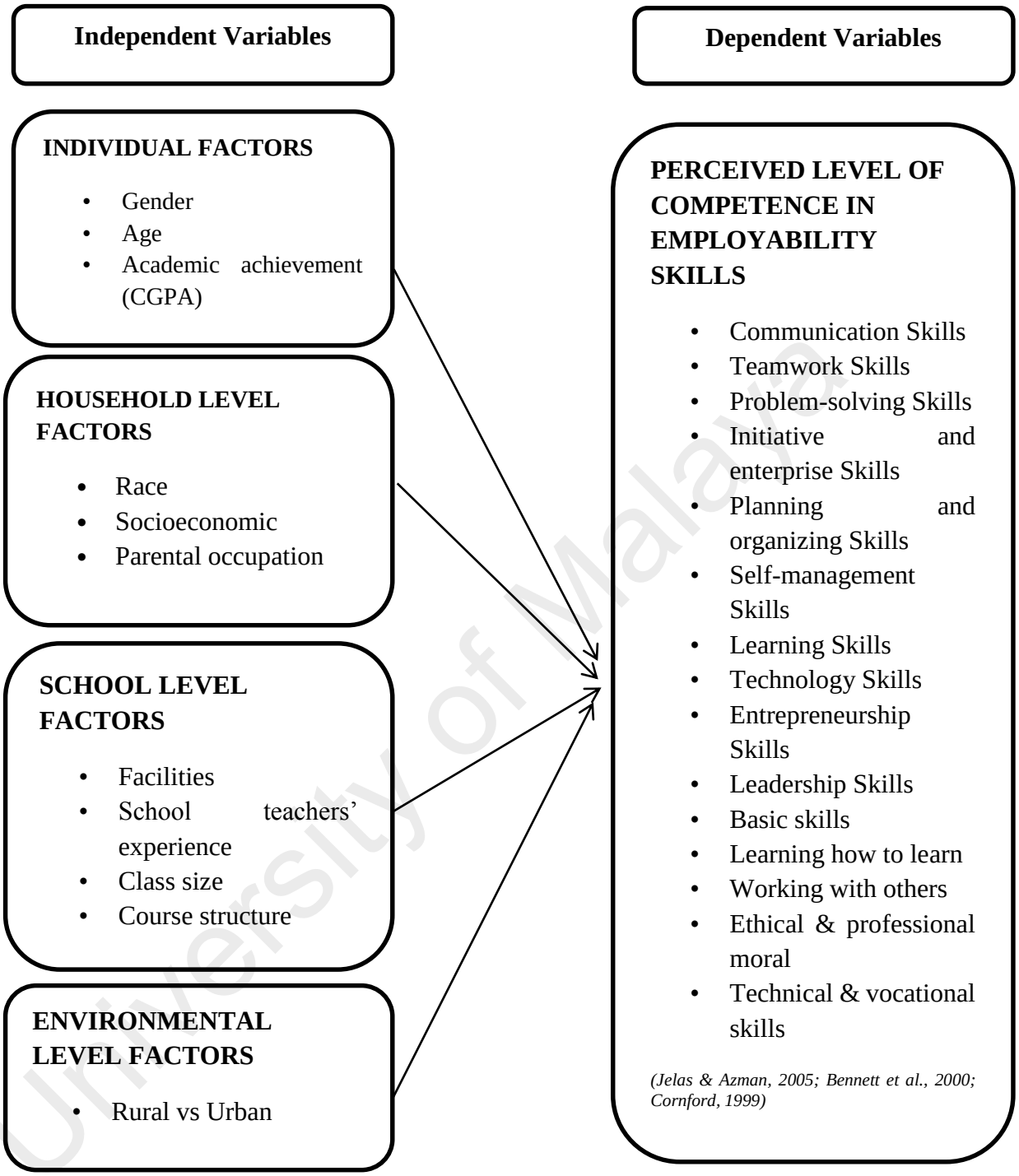

Figure 1.2. Conceptual framework of the study (Jelas & Azman, 2005; Bennett et al., 2000; Cornford, 1999)

Research Objectives

This study aimed to explore the development of the fifteen elements of employability skills among vocational students in Malaysia, there are Communication Skills, Teamwork Skills, Problem-solving Skills, Initiative and enterprise Skills, Planning and organizing Skills, Self-management Skills, Learning Skills, Technology Skills, Entrepreneurship Skills, Leadership Skills, Basic Skills, Learning how to learn, Working with others, Ethical & professional moral, Technical & vocational skills. By referring to the purposes the objectives of the study are classified as follows:

1. To identify the perceived level of competency on a let of identified employment skills among vocational students majoring in hospitality.
2. To examine the differences in competency perceived level by gender for vocational students majoring in hospitality.
3. To identify the differences in competency perceived level between rural and urban vocational students majoring in hospitality.
4. To examine the determinants of perceived level in employability skills among bakery vocational students majoring in hospitality.
5. To examine the determinants of perceived level in employability skills among culinary vocational students majoring in hospitality.
6. To identify the differences in competency perceived level between importance and competence of employability skills among bakery vocational students majoring in hospitality.
7. To identify the differences in competency perceived level between importance and competence of employability skills among culinary vocational students majoring in hospitality.

8. To examine the skills that are perceived by students for entering the hospitality profession

Research Questions

The purpose of this study aimed to explore the development of the fifteen elements of employability skills among vocational students in Malaysia. In accordance to the purpose of the study, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the perceived level of competency on a let of identified employment skills among vocational students majoring in hospitality?
2. Are there any differences in competency perceived level by gender for vocational students majoring in hospitality?
3. Are there any differences in competency perceived level between rural and urban vocational students majoring in hospitality?
4. What are the determinants of perceived level in employability skills among bakery vocational students majoring in hospitality?
5. What are the determinants of perceived level in employability skills among culinary vocational students majoring in hospitality?
6. Are there any differences in competency perceived level between importance and competence of employability skills among bakery vocational students majoring in hospitality?
7. Are there any differences in competency perceived level between importance and competence of employability skills among culinary vocational students majoring in hospitality?
8. What are the skills that are perceived by students for entering the hospitality profession?

Significance of Study

This study is expected to provide insights to the policy makers and employers on the employability skills therefore our graduates can be globally competent. It also will contribute to the local and international literature on graduate's employability skills. This study serves as guidance for Malaysia as well as other developing countries on the appropriate policy intervention that need to be taken to improve the employability skills among the Technical and Vocational Education.

This study provided an opportunity to gain the perspectives of major leader program actively examining challenges they face specific to their programs, identifying the competencies they need to manage and oversee their programs, defining developmental activities to address individual learning needs, and gaining insights about defense acquisition through dialogue with leaders from all management side.

Insights gained by seeking government program teachers' perceptions may provide additional insight about employability skills as components of the programs competencies. The information gained from this study also may prove useful to leaders responsible for developing training and professional development programs for acquisition program managers in other departments or agencies of the federal government as well as state or local governments.

This study also provides initial information for future researchers to develop a survey in employability skills or related research. In other words, findings, instrument, discussion of this research could inspire or give an idea for future researchers to survey in depth in the area for instance employability skills in hospitality graduate in ASEAN.

Limitation of the Study

The following limitations are identified prior to data collection. Each limitation discussed is related to the sample population, methodology, or possible influences on participants' responses to the questionnaire.

The study is limited to the final year students who had participated in the bakery and culinary Programs in Vocational Colleges. The study is conducted on selected vocational colleges in five regions in Malaysia.

Secondly, in term of resources (financial) is limited the study to a sample of the population of all participants who had participated in the study. This study is not pursuing under national project but it is conducted under limited financial resources and time. By these reason investigations of large numbers of students through questionnaire surveys is not possible to be conducted, because survey in large numbers of graduate students will acquire expensive cost, time consuming and has logistically complex problem.

Definition of Terms

A competency or abilities and skills model is defined as an integrating education and training, aligning both with the needs of the labor market and promoting mobility for individuals (Van der Klink & Boon, 2002; Delamare Le Deist & Winterton, 2005). Various models of competencies developing an Index of the Malaysian Tourism and Hospitality Graduates Competencies are being developed for the purpose of producing qualified graduates. A Competencies Value Framework (CVF) developed by Quinn, Thompson, Faerman and McGrath (2003) offers an opportunity to examine key managerial skills and competencies based on organizational theory. It is also considered versatile to be applied to all industry sectors as it takes a more general approach to management competencies and skills necessary

for managers to be effective. In addition, the values and principles of the CVF are also applied by other researchers and are accepted as a standard model in the Australian context (Dimmock, 1999; Colyer, 2000; Walo, 2000; Dimmock, Breen and Walo, 2003). Many competency models have been developed earlier for competency study. For example, Katz's 1955 competency model, Sandwith's 1993 competency model and Employment Training Administration (ETA) model. These competency models are either focused on specific competency or a generic competency. ETA model is a generic competency model that is based from competency based approach to training and education. ETA model outlines nine tiers of competency (Ennis, 2008). In this study, the four domains in ETA model; personal effectiveness domain, academic domain, workplace domain and management domain were used to identify the domains for competency items. Realizing the importance between competency and education and to ascertain what is provided by the educational institutions is relevant with the industry's need, a continuous evaluation of hospitality programme is essential (Jayawardena, 2001).

Accordingly, competency based education approach was integrated with education curriculum (Brownell & Chung, 2001). According to Millar et al., (2008), competency is the foundation incompetency based education and is widely accepted in technical and vocational education. Furthermore, in competency based education, one of the characteristic is for educators to focus on competencies desirable by the employers (Kouwenhoven, 2010). Schilling and Koetting (2010) also revealed that in competency based education, the construction of educational process is based on attaining specific competencies and to establish proper learning and assessment outcome. In addition, competency based education will assist educational institution to prepare students for a specific profession.

Moreover, an Australian Quality Framework was developed for a purpose to standardize qualifications across Australia and to present graduates with certificates that open the door to employment (Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 2002). The framework covers comprehensive tasks associated with different jobs in the industry which includes detailed sets of procedural steps for undertaking tasks in various functions for instance housekeeping and bar work. Margerison (2001) proposed a team competency model with performance being assessed on nine competencies. This is based on the fact that with global competition and technological advances, organizational success is depending more on team efforts rather than individual. It is important to note that a competency model describes the qualities required of a worker to be successful in a position, on a team to achieve or exceed the strategic goals of the organization (Delamare, Le Deist & Winterton, 2005; Teodorescu, 2006). Additionally, the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) developed by the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Business Council of Australia, (2002) focuses on skills acquisition and assessment to the competency model process for determining the needs of business and employers and the requirements of skilled workers. The ETA consists of nine generic skill groups similar to the "employability skills" framework proposed in a study by Australian industry representative groups. In the tourism and hospitality perspective, Sandwith (1993) developed a model consists of several items such as empowering employees and building an effective team under the leadership domain. The administrative domain includes competencies such as accounting and finance and personnel management. On the other hands, the interpersonal domain includes competencies such as writing effectively, speaking clearly and listening. Further, Kearns (2001) offered a model for clustering the generic skills which include the cognitive cluster;

interpersonal skills cluster; enterprise, innovation and creativity cluster; and work readiness and work habits cluster. The cognitive cluster consists of items such as learning, thinking, analytical capability and problem solving. The interpersonal skills cluster consists of communication, customer service and cultural understanding. The enterprise, innovation and creativity cluster consists of several items for instance enterprise, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation. Finally, the work readiness and work habits cluster involves items such as basic skills, using technology, business orientation, planning and organizing and self-management. Previously, Bach and Milman (1996) demonstrated four clusters of skills required by the hospitality industry. The clusters consist of (1) Business functional areas for instance marketing, accounting and finance; (2) Hospitality & Tourism functional areas namely accommodations, food service, travel, transportation and travel agency; (3) Personal skills which refer to individual characteristics or traits of an effective manager and finally (4) Analytical skills which cover the ability to master various types of information through computer literacy, research, report and many more.

The terms are used to describe the crystallized ability of students to deal effectively with certain kind of higher order generic reasoning task. According to Wu (2002), skills refer to the ability to perform given tasks or to master various techniques, or more broadly, it can refer to a range of behavioral attributes such as reliability, ability to work without supervision, and stability of employment. Thus, in a strict sense, skills can be defined as the required competence or needs of employment. The following terms are operationally defined as they apply to this study.

Employability Skills. According to Yorke and Knight (2004), employability skills is a set of achievements skills, understandings and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen

occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy. Those cognitive, affective, psychomotor, teachable, and basic skills necessary to get, keep, and succeed in a regular job along with flexible and dynamic employer demands (Mohd Puad, 2012). The skills are listed in the Malaysian Engineering Employability Skills (MEES) framework. There are 10 attributes or skills in the framework: (a) communication skills; (b) teamwork; (c) lifelong learning; (d) professionalism; (e) problem-solving and decision-making skills; (f) competence in application and practice; (g) knowledge of science and engineering principles; (h) knowledge of contemporary issues; (i) engineering system approaches; and (j) competence in specific engineering principles (Zaharim et al., 2010).

According to Akrivos et al., 2007; Chung-Herrera et al., 2003; DeFillippi and Arthur, 1994; Kay and Russette, 2000; Ladkin and Juwaheer, 2000; Munar and Montaňo, 2009; Ng and Pine, 2003; Sewell and Pool, 2010, communication and interpersonal skills are crucial for hospitality industry employees These skills include the ability to maintain relationships, negotiate, communicate effectively, use language, and participate actively in developing and maintaining social networks with coworkers and customers.

Communication Skills. Communication skills are necessary to enable graduates to deliver their ideas as individuals and group members. As Morreale et al., (2000) indicate, these skills combine a diversity of elements in order to produce good decisions, solutions, and negotiations (1-3). Communication skills refer to one's ability to use active listening, writing skills, oral communication, presentation skills, and questioning and feedback skills to establish successful communication (Mayer Committee, 1992, as cited by the Scottish Qualification Authority, 2003; Bennett, 2000; Washer, 2007; Jones, 2009). Communication skills continue to be essential at

work so as to maintain successful job performance. The skills need to enable graduates delivering their ideas as individual or as group members and comprising a diversity of background in order to come out with a good decision, solution and negotiations (Morreale, Osborn & Pearson, 2000). Communication skills include listening effectively, presenting, and defending views orally and in writing, and locating and organizing information from both human and electronic sources (Simons and Higgins, 1993).

Communication involves verbal, written, and listening modes. Research shows that all forms of communication are deemed as priorities for employees. Verbal and written communications, as well as listening, were deemed as necessary components of communication skills. Strong communications and written skills were of importance to employers (Fallows & Weller, 2000). Written and verbal communications skills are required if an individual is to think critically and quickly in various situations. According to Maes, Weldy and Icenogle (1997), the students need to possess good communication skills that include oral and written competencies. There are a variety of ways for communication to take place. An example of these forms of oral communication refers to communicative events engaged daily at the workplace such as telephone conversations, meetings, formal discussions, presentations, social interactions and interviews. The term skills in oral communication refers to the entire knowledge and ability that enables one to do something well and includes the following skills: listening skills, conversational skills, giving feedback, meeting skills, presentation skills, conflict resolution skills, negotiation skills, training skills, interviewing skills, persuading skills and promoting one's own strengths and abilities.

Coplin (2003) argues that effective employees have strong verbal communication skills. This verbal communication can lead to understanding between

one another. Coplin (2003) suggests that this communication can happen both through verbal and non-verbal modes. Verbal modes include things such as formal and informal presentations, one-on-one conversations (Coplin, 2003; Daft, 2005). Non-verbal modes accompany verbal messages, hereby impacting the message received. To be effective, employees must be consistent with verbal and non-verbal mode usage (DuBrin, 2007).

Contrasted with oral communication, written communication is defined by Evers et al., (1998) as the effective transfer of written information, either formally or informally. Written communication is more structured than oral communication, with opportunities for both the sender and receiver to re-read a message (Evers et al., 1998). Coplin (2003) stresses the importance of editing and proofing skills to being an effective written communicator. Editing and proofreading skills refer to revising documents, making sure text is understandable and interesting, and eliminating grammatical errors and mistakes. Successful employees can and should maximize their written communication skills to benefit their organization (DuBrin, 2007). Students need to practice effective communication in order to achieve competency in their everyday communication. Communication is vital for successful participation of work. In this study, communication practices would be investigated by looking at students' presentation, participating in discussion, sharing ideas with peer, and way of integrating information from various sources.

Teamwork Skills. The teamwork skills contribute to productive working relationships and outcomes. Skills focus on team development and performance. Team developments refer to helping the team form and finish a goal. Team performance refers to the team dynamics and working to maintain relationships (Northouse, 2010). In today's work environment it is impossible for an individual to work alone. Teams

are used in the work environment mainly to move an organization closer to the goals of the organization (Doolen, Hacker, & Van Aken, 2003). Eighty percent of companies in the United States are using teams in their organization (Robbins, 2003). Companies are seeking job candidates who possess relevant teamwork knowledge, skills and abilities (Chen, Donahue, & Klimoski, 2004). Human resource directors place teamwork as number one priority for success in the 21st century (Stashevsky & Koslowsky, 2006). Teamwork is a regular occurrence in many employment settings with a need for strong communications skills to function successfully in a team (Sleap & Reed, 2006).

According to the National Centre for Vocational Educational Research (2004), teamwork was working with different people in different settings that contributed to productive working relationships and outcomes. Organization leaders realize that highly functional teams help deliver quality products, excellent service and customer satisfaction (Draft, 2005). Casner-Lotto and Barrington (2006) surveyed 400 employers to identify skills needed for new work entrants. The results of this study indicated that teamwork and collaboration were very important for success at work (Chen et al., 2004). The report also illustrated that teamwork and collaboration were among the skills that would become increasingly important in the next five years. Teamwork can be defined as a commitment to common goals among all team members (Lussier & Achua, 2007).

Problem-solving Skills. Problem-solving skills practices mean to enable the students to tackle the problems systematically at the working place toward the solution and learning from this process (QCA, 2002). According to Pumphrey and Slater (2002), the ability to solve business and operational problems, reduce downtime and increase system efficiency is all part of the pressures now faced by employees at almost

all occupational levels. On the other hands, this requires an individual to focus on the whole production and delivery process in order to understand the significance of a task; on the other hand, it requires independence of thought and action, and a sense of resourcefulness to pre-empt, identify or remedy problems. In this survey, problem solving skills will be investigated through students' activities, for instances, problem identification in doing assignment, ways of tackle problems, looking at previous problems and self-learning. Problem solving skills constitute the ability to tackle problems systematically, for the purpose of working towards solutions and learning from this process (Jelas et al., 2006; Washer, 2007). The ability to solve problems will have a great impact on the success of the students' "real life" endeavors (Cook & Slife, 1985). QCA (2000) explains the purpose of these skills as to enable students to tackle problems systematically in the workplace, working towards appropriate solutions and learning from this process. The SCANS report (1991) described problem solving skills as the ability to generate new ideas, make decisions, solve problems, organize and process information in various forms, and know how to learn, and reason. The report also stated good jobs depend on people who can put knowledge to work. New workers must be creative problem solvers and have the skills and attitudes on which employers can build.

Information Technology (IT) Skills. Information technology skills are one of the employability skills which appear to create a powerful synergy for "employability skills development". The use of technology in teaching and learning would provide many opportunities to teachers and learners in order to develop their lifelong learning (Herrington & McLoughlin, 1999). In this study, students' IT practices include use of Computer, Cd Roms, Internet, WEB, online program, software, database, video and others technology by students for learning. IT skills refers to the ability of individuals

to apply technology such as computers, software applications, databases, and other technologies to achieve a wide variety of academic, work-related, and personal goals (Mayer Committee, 1992, as cited by the Scottish Qualification Authority, 2003; ACRL, 2004; Washer, 2007). Harrington and Elander (2003) refer to the use of technology in teaching and learning to provide manifold opportunities for teachers and learners to develop their lifelong learning.

Entrepreneurship Skills. Entrepreneurship skills are the ability to of an individual to exploit an idea and create an enterprise (Small or Big) not only for personal gain but also for social and developmental gain (Olagunju, 2004).

Numeracy Skills. Numeracy skills is defined as the aggregate of skills, knowledge, beliefs, patterns of thinking, and related communicative and problem solving processes that individuals need to effectively interpret and handle real-world quantitative situations and problems (Gal, 1997; Jelas et al., 2006; Washer, 2007). Numeracy skills are not only related with number, however it includes the ability of some on to handle information, to express ideas and opinions, to make decisions, solve problems, times management and job priority (Jelas et al, 2006 & Bennet et al, 2000). In this study, students' activities and engagement which related to numeracy activities are such as time managements, identifying relevant and irrelevant information, reporting tasks or assignments by using charts, tables, graphs and numbers.

Learning how to learn. Learning how to learn is learning features processes, understandings and skills that can be learned and taught when one has gained mastery in learning how to learn, one can learn effectively and efficiently at any age (Fry et al., 2002; Bennet et al., 2000). Thus this skills is thought to be of potential importance to the concept of lifelong learning and the self-managed learner. In this study, learning how to learn encompass improving self-ability, performance, self-learning, identifying

learning strategy and prioritizing tasks. Learning how to learn is defined as acquiring the set of skills and knowledge required to learn efficiently and effectively in any learning situation (QCA, 2000). Learning demands processes, understandings, and skills that can be learned and taught. When one has gained mastery in learning how to learn, one can learn effectively and efficiently at any age. Thus, this competence is considered of potential importance to the concept of lifelong learning and the self-managed learner (Smith, 1982; Jelas et al., 2006; Washer, 2007).

Working with others (WWO). Working with others (WWO) focuses on helping students to learn to become valued members of a team which is one of the most vital skills that one should have for employability (QCA, 2004). The ability to work as a team member will give a great impact to produce new ideas and to find a way out in every situation of real work life. Working with others is defined as the ability to meet one's own responsibilities and work cooperatively in a pair or a group for the purpose of achieving shared objectives (QCA, 2000; Jelas et al., 2006; Washer, 2007). Learning to become valuable members of a team is one of the most vital skills for employability (Mayer Committee, 1992; QCA, 2000). The ability to work as a team member will have a great impact on the student's ability to produce new ideas and deal with any situation in real-life work. In this study, WWO development were investigated through questionnaire which is related to students' activities in group, such as group discussion, group assignment or project, collaboration and cooperation, intercommunications with different races.

Initiative and Enterprise Skills. Initiative and Enterprise Skills is skills that contribute to innovative outcomes. The ability of an individual to show initiative in the workplace and achieve outputs and outcomes of their job without close and detailed

supervision, and the ability to suggest and initiate changes in the way work is undertaken (ACCI & BCA 2002).

Planning and Organizing Skills. Planning and Organizing Skills is skills that contribute to long-term and short-term strategic planning. The capacity to plan and organize one's own work activities, including making good use of time and resources, sorting out priorities and monitoring performance (Australian Education Council & The Mayer Committee 1992).

Self-management Skills. Self-management Skills is skills that contribute to employee satisfaction and growth. Self-management Skills at workplace is about planning, organizing and controlling the employee's own work activities (Renn et al., 2011). Self-management practices are useful in enhancing the behavior that is desirable for the employees at workplace, and controlling the behavior that is undesirable and which may arise from impulses, innate habits and behavior learned due to upbringing.

Learning Skills. Learning Skills is skills that contribute to ongoing improvement and expansion in employee and company operations and outcomes. The ability an individual to be enthusiastic and flexible about how their learning occurs and to contribute to the learning community in the workplace (ACCI & BCA 2002)

Leadership Skills. As mentioned by Holtkamp (2014), leadership skills are abilities to be an effective leader which are enabled by certain key traits. They are the interface between personal characteristics and action in leadership practices. As derived in Sandwith's Model (1993), the leadership skills are vital and eventually contributed as a major domain in the model. Similarly, the findings conclude that the hospitality graduates eventually need to have strong leadership abilities and skills so

that they are able to lead others and willing to be led by others in order to perform better task for achieving organization's vision

Hospitality Industry. Hospitality is a service industry divided into sectors including lodging, food and beverage, conference, meeting, and events, recreation, travel and tourism, and transportation. The hospitality industry is a multi-billion dollar a year enterprise (Walker, 2004; 2007).

Summary

Chapter one provides an overview of this thesis. The chapter presents the background to the research, a discussion of the research problem and research questions, the objectives of the research, the theoretical framework and the research methodology. This chapter also provides a brief discussion of the justification for the research and the contributions of the research, and the research limitations. The chapter concludes with definitions of key terms. Next chapter discussed the review of literature related to the critical problem of skills and proficiencies development required of the curriculum that prepares students for success in the workplace. The chapter explored the skill needs and expectations employers have of recent vocational college graduates they employ, including the current employability readiness of graduates and the role of previous work experience in students' skill development. In addition, the chapter provided the theoretical framework for the study.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of current literature to support the present study. Employability skills are referred to as the skill required to secure and retain a job and recent usage of the term that is often used to describe the training or foundation skills upon which a person must develop job-specific skills. Employability skills are those essential skills necessary for acquiring, keeping and performing well on a job (Shafie & Nayan, 2010). Such skills include; managing resources, communication and interpersonal skills, team work and problem-solving and acquiring and maintaining a job. Generally, employability skills are required by students to prepare themselves to meet the needs of various occupations after graduation. According to Shafie and Nayan, (2010) todays the employers are worried about getting good workers who not only have basic academic skills for example reading, writing, science, mathematics, oral communication and listening but also higher order thinking skills for instance learning, reasoning, thinking creatively, decision making and problem solving. According to Robinson, et al., (2007) there is a great demand for educated people with general employability and specialized technical skills. Workers in the 21st century need skills such as problem-solving and analytic, decision-making, organization and time management, risk-taking, and communication to be employable in the workforce. A study conducted by the Stanford Research Institute and Carnegie Melon Foundation involving Fortune 500 CEOs found that 75% of long-term job success depended upon people skills and that only 25% of technical knowledge. (Malhi, 2009). Further in the analysis found that the key traits employers are keen to look for are on the achievement orientation such as self-motivation, proactive, high integrity, reliable, able to work

independently with minimal supervision, emotionally stable and able to perform well under pressure.

It is about 70% of public universities and institutes of higher learning graduates in the country are unemployed. This is in contrast to 26% for private institutions of higher learning and 34% for foreign graduates. A survey conducted earlier has indicated that as many as 30% of the unemployed local graduates are computer science and information technology degree holders. These skills are in obvious demand in the country - it is not a mismatch. The clear cut issue is that many of the local institutions of higher learning; both public and private have failed to offer a sufficiently rigorous education to produce the necessary quality in the workforce which the industry requires. From the perspective of the production industrial employers, technical graduates master sufficient technical skills, but lack of motivation, interpersonal, critical thinking, problem solving and entrepreneurship skills (Satar, 2010). They also mentioned in research by Syed Hussain (2010) that 62.3% graduates in technical fields are still jobless because they lack of employability skills rather than technical skills required by the industry. Therefore, he suggested that the human resource department has to provide several short courses to help upgrade these skills. Hence, Satar et al. (2010) also addressed issues in Mohamed Rashid (2004) research on polytechnic graduates found that about 50.5% technical graduates of Malaysian Polytechnics are jobless for almost nine months of the year because of lack employability skills. He found that these graduates are also weak in communication, writing and computer skills. While Kathleen (2005), in her research on technical graduates in America, had also found that employers are not satisfied with the job applicants from graduates, not because they do not have enough technical skills or knowledge, but because they have not enough non-technical skills. Many factors might have contributed to this situation;

it varies from unstable economic growth right to the individuals who are not competent or capable of securing a job because they are selective, lazy, not willing to accept low salaries, not willing to relocate, lack of communication skills, not creative, and etc. This worrying development is especially glaring among our universities graduates who seemed to be jobless for more years that they should. Could the problem lies in the hands of the graduates themselves; that they do not possess enough hard skills to be employed or is it because their attitudes or their perceptions are to be blamed for them to be stuck in the rut for so many years which often lead them settling for less than their qualification deserve.

Employability skills have been defined as a group of important skills and competencies needed to produce an efficient workforce. The latter must possess positive characteristics such as being innovative, creative, productive, skillful, and competitive and having a strong sense of determination in handling the challenges of the 21st century as well as those of the industry and globalization (Overtoom, 2000). Thus, the ongoing changes at the workplace, the nature of the work itself and advances in technology would require a workforce that is equipped with high level skills and positive attitudes. New technologies have brought about changes in workflows and this has, in itself, brought about a shift of workforce requirements from low-skilled workers to a highly-skilled (K-workers) and well-informed workforce. Invariably, the current workplace requires workers with high technical skills as well as the ability to work well with others (Overtoom, 2000). To cope with these inevitable changes, the society requires its education and training system to be molded to meet such needs.

Many have expressed concerns about the mismatch between skills imparted in formal education systems and the demands of the workplace. This situation has been exacerbated in recent years with the integration of new technologies in every scope of

professional human activity. Hence, narrowing the gap between education and the world of work is thus a priority for most governments because of the potential economic and social benefits to be derived from those who are engaged in productive livelihoods. It is essential to consider what the industries are looking for when hiring graduates (Kay & Rusette, 2000). Therefore, determining the competencies from the industry's viewpoint is necessary. In order to enrich human capital development, the 'Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013- 2025' was introduced in 2013 that emphasized the need for collaboration between the education providers and the industry (Malaysia Education Blueprint, 2013). As Malaysia attempt to be a developed nation by 2020, the introduction of this blueprint is in line with the government's effort to develop skillful human capital. The move is expected to equip future Malaysian graduates with competency desired by the industry. The importance to possess competencies for successful career in the industry is evident for graduates. In Australia for example, interpersonal skills, problem solving and self-management is considered as salient competencies for hospitality industry (Raybould & Wilkins, 2006). In the Northern America, good attitude is an outstanding skill if graduates were to work in the accommodation sector. This competency should be bundled with the soft and hard skills (Tesone & Ricci, 2005; Sisson & Adam, 2013). It was also revealed that beside interpersonal skills, leadership skills have been critical success in the hospitality industry (Kay & Russette, 2000). The research conducted in Ireland revealed the growing emphasized on soft and human relation skills (Nolan et al., 2010). In an earlier study by Connolly and McGing (2006), managers in three, four and five star accommodation sector in Dublin preferred to hire graduates with a balance of both practical and analytical skills. The competencies include people management skills and human resource skills including communication; having good personality;

customer service skills; supervisory skills; personnel skills; problem-solving skills; finance skills; accounting and budgeting skills. In addition to such competencies, competency building is a way to gain views from expert in the field (Hong & Wang, 2003).

TVET in developed and developing countries. Although a significant amount of evidence indicates that more education can enhance job market opportunities for individuals, unemployment levels remain high for young individuals with advanced degrees, particularly in developing countries. Many developed and developing countries in the world are looking to their TVET systems to provide a response to changes in the global economy. Some countries are proactive with respect to these changes, adopting long-term strategies that should benefit their economies (Comyn, 2007). He further stated that, linking industry with TVET systems is a key priority and often a central principle of policy reform in several developed and developing countries. As is the case in numerous investigations of employability skills in developed nations, researchers in Malaysia also indicated a mismatch between the qualifications of graduates and the needs of employers. Specifically, it was found that a lack of student exposure existed in relation to the realities of the job market. Further, inconsistencies were identified among the levels of demand and supply of graduates with appropriate employability skills. In addition, employers in this context maintain perceptions that graduates often lack the soft or non-technical skills needed for employment; causing students to remain ill prepared for the job environment.

TVET system in the UK. In the UK, decisions concerning HRD are taken mainly by those in organizations in what is referred to as a voluntaries approach (Gold, 2003). At this approach Hillage et al., (1998) have also recently referred that in UK there is a voluntarism system concerning the training of employer, under this system

the owners of the work are in choice whether they train their employees or not, by little needs. The role of the authorities here is to promote the organizations to bear responsibility for training and development and its funding, therefore, this approach is in the contrary to the interventionist approach, for that, the government or its agents try to affect the process of decision making in organizations and make decisions that complying with the whole economy (Gold, 2003). There was an increasing effect on the institutions and the training structures by the employers, this led to changes done to involve employee engagement, and therefore the government training system meets business they need. Accordingly, the nature of the productive, education and training systems are decided by market forces, provided that the role of the government is finite to setting up the legal framework in which the business and training activities and dissenting market failure (Centre for Labor Market Studies, 1999). Consecutive UK governments used these national skill systems, giving the major responsibility to the organizations and individuals to get the benefit of these skills (Beattie, 2002). Ashton and Green (1996) stated that the government contribution is required to shift to the economy with a high skill that links the major actors to provide certain high skill policies, consisting of policies that affect the requirement for skills. The literature also shows that when industrial base influenced by a rapid change, the government should carry on a coordination role consistency with demand (Ashton et al., 1999).

The UK TVET system is reviewed in 1980, and it became clear that the system has many weak points, of these are (Tapin, 2002):

- No clear model of vocation qualification provision and there are gaps in these qualifications on offer.

- The constituents and components of the course were determined by organization with a humble knowledge of the industry. The system was supply driven and not related to work sufficiently.
- A method of Evaluation, such as examinations depends upon testing the knowledge of a student on the day, rather than examining the skills or competence within a period of time, in the worksites.
- Many restrictions to access, progression and transfer credit beside that there IS no flexibility of vocational qualification.
- There are some expensive and unfocused training.
- However, after that radical reformation of TVET in the UK has taken place, those reforms are listed below (Tapin, 2002).
- Government policies promoting strong relation between the fields of education and training and the employers leading in the design and development of UK standards of employment.
- Substituting industry training arrangements which are levy supported with the local sector's skills driven by employers.
- Promoting the framework of the national qualification.
- Legalization to activate the delivery sector of TVET to development and change.

TVET system in Germany. The German TVET system, commonly referred to as VET system, is a 'directed' and dual system of vocational training which according to (Holden, 2004) considered as an example of the excellent practice. Besides describing it as (dual system), it is important to indicate that this terminology is not suitable to the rules of the German VET (Reinisch & Frommberger, 2004). According to Reinisch and Frommberger (2004), dual indicates simultaneous

education and training at the workplace, in enterprises and public utilities and in special schools, but it does not mean that the two parts of the system are equivalent. They add that training at the workplace dictates the school-based part of TVET.

The dual system is the main pathway from school to working life for young people in Germany. For example, in 1999 there were around 3.3 million students between 16 and 20 year old in Germany, of whom about 29% attended the Gymnasium or a full-time higher vocational school to obtain permission to study at a university or at an institution of applied science (Fachhochschule), and more than 50% of them chose the dual system to get a qualified vocational certificate (Reinisch & Frommberger, 2004). TVET in Germany is guided not only by the requirements of the labor market, but also by the need of individuals to acquire skills, knowledge and competences which enable them successfully to establish themselves on the labor market. Training programs are designed on the principle that they should be as broad as possible and as specific as necessary (HippachSchneider et al., 2007). The German dual system of TVET represents an excellent case example of the best way of conserving the integrity and relevance of TVET outcomes, by directing both providers and industry models within a relationship of a particular type. By the same nature of the relationship, strong information links between the providers of TVET and employers are strongly fixed and contained in the dual system (Durden & Yang 2006). However, the German system has been subject to some criticisms. Three core mechanisms of the system appear to be failing concerning new economic and social challenges (Greinert, 2004 cited in Deissinger & Hellwig, 2005) the recruiting mechanism that must provide a training and labor market with qualified apprentices appears to fail due to companies preferring to recruit employees from outside the dual system, consequently, opportunities for skilled workers to climb to a position of a

technical assistant are gradually disappearing and qualified school leavers prefer pathways outside the dual system, the funding mechanism seems to fail since the stabilization of the dual system is cost-intensive, particularly regarding the new federal states in the East of Germany, which yet have not been successful in implementing an appropriate funding scheme; and problems have not been resolved concerning the mechanism of learning places which comprises periods of theoretical learning in the compulsory vocational part-time school and periods of practical learning in the workplace. Hamlin (1999) described the German system as depending upon a corporatist approach, containing at the national level a tripartite Federal Institute of Vocational Training composed of workers, trade federalist education specialists and governmental representatives. These work as per of the Federal Vocational Training Act of 2005 (Federal Ministry of Education and Research, 2005). Contrary to the belief that the German VET is funded and run by the state; the fact is that employers fund two-thirds of VET, and employers and trade unions have' a considerable influence on the control of the system, together with central and local government (Holden, 2004). However, though laws and regulations relevant to TVET are abode to offer funding and training resources, the employees union and state shall directly render the institutions and procedures which operate the system (Holden, 2004). The dual system as shown in Figure 2.1 begins in the latter years of school where the emphasis is cited on a high level of education for all. The common trend of thinking represented in that general education supplies a consolidated base for the coming learning (Holden, 2004). Rose and Wignanek (1990, quoted in Holden, 2004) stated that most of those who leave school, and about 25% of young people with the new qualification equivalent to (A) levels have access to the college and university system. In the dual system, on-the-job training is provided by the employers and off-the-job training by the training

providers (VET providers). This is carried out in coordination between the components of the systems: the state, the employers and the union. After having obtained the qualifications required, trainees can find employment in the sectors they have been trained in.

The main policies and practices of the German TVET System can be summed up as follows (Holden, 2004):

- Dual system - in-company training (practical); vocational school (theoretical)
- Apprenticeships - 319 000 places, though demand is decreasing
- Technical colleges
- Universities
- Training culture directed; functional; industry oriented, particularly engineering.

TVET system in Korea. Korea got a quick economic development due to the effort of its strong government which has invested in TVET system (Hawley & Paek, 2005; Lee, 2004; Ashton et al., 2002). Both senior secondary schools and post-secondary institutions (junior colleges) are provided by TVET programs, while training outside the schools is given as non-formal education (Mu-Keun, 1999). Korea's vocational system at the secondary level is divided clearly between vocational and secondary schools. This system rendered by the government. Usually, the vocational education programming and the activities of the secondary schools are under taken by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources (Hawley, 2009; Lee, 2004). The ladder of education starts with primary school (6 years), junior secondary school (3 years), and then comes the senior secondary school that has (3 years) programed; these vocational senior secondary schools are the main institutions for

training craftsmen as well as skilled manpower (Mu-Keun, 1999). Junior vocational colleges provide (2 years) post-secondary programs, and the objective of the junior college education is to tum out the technicians with middle level who has got a theoretical background and practical qualifications to comply with the increasing demand for technicians after quick industrialization (Mu-Keun, 1999; Jeong, 1999). The public vocational training is carried out by the Korea Manpower Agency (KOMA) directed by the Ministry of Labor and Local Governments. It gives programs which last from three months to two years for train both skilled and semi-skilled manpower. The local governments concentrate on training in trades for enhancing the income of farm households, whereas KOMA renders institutes doing in a wide range of occupations (Lee, 2004; Mu-Keun, 1999).

The program's 2 +1 in technical schools is similar to the dual system in Germany. Applied in the technical high schools, the 2 +1 program provides students with two years training and helps students to obtain practical knowledge and skills in these vocational high schools, where 2 + 1 program operates, the students spend their last year of high school in industry, the students may join between learning and work under a contract for On-the-Job Training (OJT) (lung, et al., 2004). The aims of 2 +1 system for technical high schools is to give training to students by which they acquire the skills required by the industrial sector and transition to work market there is an effective participation of enterprises in school-industry partnerships for the submission of education and training. These enterprises helping in two ways:

- It helps to an organized use of materials and human resources ill the delivery of education.
- To leave the theoretical education and adhere to practical and work oriented education (Lung et al., 2004). There is a global trend towards encouraging the

close relation between learning and work, and between school and the worksites to comply changing economy and industry. The 2+ 1 system is in line with the international trend (Lee, 1998).

Since the needed production skills became increasingly sophisticated with the manufacturing of higher value-added products in the late 1980s, firms started to emphasize skills upgrading for their workforce and at the same time placing less emphasis on the initial training for trainees before employment (Mu-Keun, 1999). To encourage organizations to provide further training of workforce in employment, the government has introduced the vocational competency development scheme with the enactment of the Vocational Training Promotion Act in 1999. All firms with more than fifty employees are required to provide vocational competency development programs for their employees and for job seekers (Mu-Keun, 1999).

TVET system in Malaysia. In Malaysia the formal vocational education started in 1897 by the British, to train Malay youths with a limited purpose represented in training mechanics and fitters to work on the railway lines. Some changes took place since then, and in 1965 Malaysia has introduced the comprehensive education system (Mustapha, 2001; Mustapha & Abdullah, 2001). Within the general education, students study vocational and technical studies, and the situation has continued until the introduction of the new vocational education system in 1987, where the student can choose either: to enter the vocational programmed to obtain the Malaysian Certificate of Vocational Education examination, or to register for the skills training programmed for two years to obtain the National Industrial Training and Trade Certification Board examination (Mustapha, 2001). Students were also studying academic subjects to get a good base in case they decide to carry on their HE in

technical and polytechnics colleges, without prejudice the vocational skills development at the lower level (Mustapha & Greenan 2002; Mustapha, 2001).

The formal technical and vocational education system starts at the upper secondary level to prepare them for further technical education at the tertiary level (at the polytechnic, college, and university levels) or for entry into the workforce. There are 70 secondary vocational schools with total enrollment 33,751 students and 17 secondary technical schools having a total of 11,136 students (Hawley, 2009). TVET, as well as skill training in Malaysia, is offered by various types of educational and training institutions, but public institutions play the leading role. All skill training-related standards and certification are coordinated by the National Vocational Training Council (NVTC), which includes representation from the government and the private sector (Hawley, 2009).

The Centre for Skills Development (2008) indicates that the National Vocational Training Council (MVLK) was established by the Ministry of Human Resources in 1989: to promote and coordinate skills training strategies in line with Malaysia's technological and economic development needs. As part of the National Skills Development Act (2006), the body was launched as the Department of Skills Development. The main objectives of Department are to (Centre for Skills Development, 2008):

- Establish a coordinated skills training system attuned to Malaysia's development goals and needs.
- Promote the development of skills training.
- Certify skills competence

These objectives are attained during the National Occupational Skills Standards (NOSS), launched in 1992 as an agency to review and implement required

changes to the country's training and accreditation system. The National Dual Training System (NDTS) was launched in 2005 in response to recommendations made by German consultants in a 1999 report entitled: Basic Study on the Design of a Dual Vocational Training Scheme in Malaysia (Centre for Skills Development, 2008). Hence, the Malaysian system is based on the German method of training in both training institutions and the workplace. Training is for two years, with trainees spending 70-80% of their time in workplaces and the remaining 20-30% in selected training institutions (Centre for Skills Development, 2008).

The TVET sector in Malaysia is expected to play an important role in the economy of the country since the government is promoting the development of human resources in the industry sector, to guarantee the competency and the skills of the workers. However, the government established many vocational education and training institutions. These institutions are under the supervision of four Ministries: - Ministry of Education, Human Resources, Entrepreneur Development and Youth and Sports (Western Australian Trade Office in Malaysia, 2003). On the contrary to academic institutions, the private sector is not as active in this area due to the fact that vocational training institutions are an intensive (Western Australian Trade Office in Malaysia, 2003).

The Malaysian experiment regarding the combining of the relationship between education and worksite has been associated with an extensive development vision that depends upon a group of political, and management levels and upon striving corruption and to maintain the Asian Malaysian culture (Jalal, 2007). The 2020 vision has started in 1981 which represents a strategic plan over forty years, the plan composed of the following (Jalal, 2007):

- HRD, it depends on the development of skills, knowledge, capabilities, works ethics, human being creativity and self-education. This can be achieved at different phases and categories of educational institutions.
- Concentrating on co-ordination between the TVET and HE of their programmers, competencies and the change needs of the labor market during the long-term of the plan. These need a continuous estimation to show the degree of this alignment and compliance with the requirements of the labor market throughout the continuous coordination with sectors of the labor market.

The Ministry of Education has made many programs which encourage the linkage between TVET and industries, which are consolidated upon when the Time Sector Privatization Policy (TSP) plan was, introduced (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 1996). This plan (TSP) gives way to the industrial and public sector to use the training utilities in TVET institutions and polytechnic schools. As experienced in work the TSP programs are beneficial to both institutions and industries (Dyankov, 1996). The TSP plan has three programs, these are:

- Joint Training Programs: applied via alignment between the institutions and industry. Industry shall contribute through, financing, equipment and technical aids whereas the institution shall provide the space and the workshop utilities.
- Customized Training Programs: to be applied as per the requirements of a particular industry. Staff provided by industry or the institution. Course participants are staff members of the company who needs the competencies to be developed during these programs. Here the basic equipment and the space of workshop are provided by the institution while training is financed by both industry and institution.

- Modular Training Programs: these are usually short courses demanded by people and offered by individual institutions throughout their own staff and facilities. The fees of the course and those who are joining the course are determined by the institutions themselves (Dyankov, 1996). Schooling hours and during holidays, the training facilities are not under use, so this period shall be exploited by industries under the concept of 'privatization', in this case, fees are charged to cover running and maintenance of the relevant facilities (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 1996). Steps for application of different types of time sector privatization programs are made and some of these programs have been affected with great success (UNESCOUNEVOC, 1996).

A summary of transformation program and initiatives by respective agencies are shown in Table 2.1 below

Table 2.1
Some of transformation focus and initiatives by respective TVET agencies

Ministry	Implementing agency / Regulating body	Transformation focus / initiatives
Ministry of Education	Technical and Vocational school	Introduction of BVE and VC TVET diploma that meets MSC Level 3 and Level 4.
Ministry of Education (previously Ministry of Higher Education)	Polytechnic	To be main TVET institution at the regional level Employability – at least 85% employed within 6 months after graduation To attract 50% of school leavers
Ministry of Education (previously Ministry of Higher Education)	Community college	Focused on high income Graduate entrepreneurship program
Ministry of Rural and Regional Development	MARA	Global human capital with integrity and innovation Creating business leaders, entrepreneurs and professionals Bridging program from the basic certificate to the advanced diploma
Ministry of Human Resources	DSD	To be a single agency to harmonize the TVET standards and curriculum

	Accreditation body for skills sector MSC as the national certification for TVET Establish Skills Malaysia to change public perception towards TEVT and to attract students to join TVET

Source: Rasul et al., (2015)

Malaysia is addressing the complexity of various providers and perspectives by forming the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) and transforming teachers' competencies by including industrial experience and considering industry needs, creating policy guidelines to develop highly effective instructors, and promoting teacher capacity building program by introducing a training levy.

The main government agencies involved in TVET teachers training are Ministry of Education (MoE) and Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), which were merged into one as MoE, Ministry of Human Resources (MoHR), Ministry of Youth and Sports (MYS) and Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA). The aspects of qualification and quality of the TVE training have become issues in teacher training in the country. It is expected that by the year 2020 all teachers must possess a first degree before they can join the teaching profession to ensure all teachers pass the 'quality criteria' before leaving the training institute (Hassan et al., 2012).

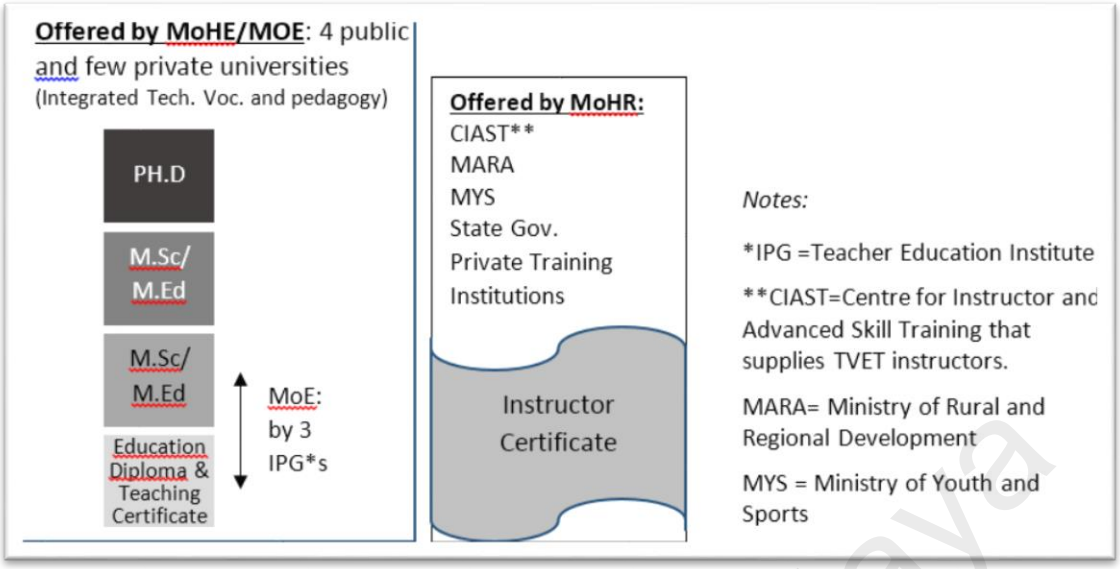

Figure 2.1 shows common approaches to TVET teacher education in Malaysia.

As shared during the Experts Meeting in 2012, Hassan observed that current governance structure still lacks coordination, sharing of resources, and articulation within the overall system, thus reflecting inefficiency in the system. There is also no single oversight body to provide overview of TVET landscape. Four policies have been introduced to enhance access to quality TVET in Malaysia: (a) improving the perception of TVET and attracting more trainees; (b) upgrading and harmonizing TVET curriculum quality in line with industry requirements by initiatives which include standardizing TVET curriculum, recognizing the national skills qualification, and establishing a new Malaysian Board of technologists; (c) developing highly effective instructors, including the establishment of a new Centre for Instructor and Advanced Skills Training; and (d) streamlining the delivery of TVET, including a review of the current funding approach of TVET and to undertake performance ratings of TVET institutions (Hasan 2012).

There is a need for Malaysia to have new National TVET-Teacher Qualification Standards and training policies in conjunction with the transformation of the vocational education system. Hassan also highlighted the need to strengthen the

skills accreditation programs in order for the new models of TVET teachers to fulfil high standards of teacher's quality and market needs (Refer Table 2.2 for more information about current policies, issues, strategies, and recommendations).

Table 2.2
Malaysia's current TVET policies and practices, issues and challenges, strategies, and recommendations

Policies and Practices	Challenges and Issues	Strategies	Recommendations
• MOE identified teachers' competencies as one of the most important enablers in TVET transformation. • TVE teachers must be trained and educated with knowledge and skills related with industry needs. • The MOE has an 'open' policy of recruiting only the best and skillful vocational teachers. • A policy to develop highly effective instructors, including to establish a new Centre for Instructor and Advanced Skills Training.	• Various TVET providers –operate differently, resulting in overlapping courses and creating some confusion. This has implications for the standardization of training and qualification, cost-effectiveness, quality assurance, recognition of prior learning and further education of TVET graduates. • Lack of effective coordination, sharing of resources and articulation within system. • No single oversight body to provide overview of TVET landscape. • Lack of qualification standards • Demand-Supply mismatch.	• Malaysian Quality Agency is one of the accreditation bodies that ensures standard of training and education of teacher education providers. • Strengthen working relationship with other TVET providers locally and internationally; • Introduce a method of recruitment through the Accreditation Prior Experience Learning (APEL) in recruiting teachers. • Collaboration with other ministries and department to exchange training contents and to arrange cross articulations.	• Propose an accreditation body to provide professional teaching license. • Apply National Dual Training System (NDTS), as part of TVE teachers training. Approximately 70-80% of the training is done in the industry, while the remaining 20-30% is carried out in training institutions, utilizing curriculum developed by the National Occupational Core Curriculum (NOCC).

Introduction of Vocational Education

Studies of competencies needed by hospitality graduates have adopted multiple models to define and categorize specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes or attributes (KSAs) essential for success. Sandwith (1993) suggested that a competency domain model could be used to determine job performance requirements, with the resulting job profiles then guiding the design and development of training programs. He identified five areas of managerial competencies:

- Conceptual/creative—cognitive skills associated with comprehending important elements of the job and generating ideas for action
- Leadership—skills in turning ideas into action
- Interpersonal—skills necessary to interact effectively with others for communication and related skills, including oral presentation, telephone, conflict management, and negotiating skills
- Administrative—skills in the personnel and financial management of the business
- Technical—knowledge and skills associated with the actual work that the organization does

Other studies have used both more complex and simpler models to categorize KSAs. Chung-Herrera, Enz, and Lankau (2003) constructed a model using eight overarching factors divided into 28 dimensions and 99 specific behavioral competencies, whereas Tesone and Ricci (2005) simply used the three areas of knowledge, skills/abilities, and attitudes to categorize the 41 items they studied. A two-category competency model used in a number of studies (Banupriya, 2011; Mitchell, Skinner, & White, 2010; Shub & Stonebraker, 2009) but rarely used in the hospitality field (Spowart, 2011) divides knowledge, skills, and abilities into hard and soft categories. The majority of these studies define hard competencies as a combination of technical and/or cognitive knowledge and skills and soft competencies as personal behavioral attributes, values, or traits, including ethics, communication, leadership, interpersonal, and teamwork skills (Banupriya, 2011; Ling, Ofori, & Low, 2000; Mitchell et al., 2010; Shub & Stonebraker, 2009; Sutton, 2002; Towner, 2002). Whilst, James and James (2004) defined hard skills as task-oriented competencies learned through education and/or training and soft skills as aspects of attitude and emotion that

are demonstrated through effective communication and interaction with customers and employees. A review of the literature in the hospitality industry finds that numerous hard and soft competencies have been identified as important for hospitality program graduates, with soft competencies most often considered more essential than hard ones.

Brownell (1994) sought to identify communication skills and job-related activities that contributed most to women's career advancement in hospitality management. She found that at midlevel management, directing skills such as delegating are more important, but at the general manager level, skills such as listening are more important, and that job knowledge (technical skills) ranked low in importance at both levels. Okeiyi, Finley, and Postel (1994) investigated which competencies are most important for graduates in food and beverage management. They found human relation and managerial skills to be most important and technical skills to be less important. In 1996, Tas, LaBrecque, and Clayton, using a refined version of Sandwith (1993) five competency domains, found that interpersonal, leadership, and conceptual-creative competencies were ranked most important for hotel manager trainees, with technical skills ranking last in importance.

Su, Miller, and Shanklin (1997), studying accreditation standards for hospitality programs, found that a mixed bag of skills is important as rated by industry professionals. These included competencies in interpersonal communication, management information systems, financial management, ethical considerations, and management of personnel. In 1999, Cho and Connolly found an increasing need to provide information technology education to hospitality students and that this could enhance problem-solving skills and their ability to satisfy guests.

Chung (2000) obtained results similar to those of Tas et al., (1996) in a study of Korean hospitality program alumni. Management of employees and interpersonal competencies such as enhancing socialization and interpersonal relationships with employees were most important for career success, whereas technical skills such as operational management, marketing, and finance were of lesser importance.

More recently, Whitelaw et al., (2009) concluded that academicians are pushing for the development of higher order skills such as critical thinking, management, and strategy development, whereas the industry places a greater emphasis on frontline supervisory and interpersonal skills. Finally, Spowart (2011) suggested that key competencies necessary for success in the work environment, identified as soft skills such as customer service and communication skills, should be included and assessed as part of the hospitality curriculum. In summary, most but not all studies found that competencies in listening, communication, human relations, leadership, and management of others were most important for success. A few studies found leadership and interpersonal competencies to be of lesser importance than being adaptable to a changing environment or possessing strong financial competencies. Even fewer studies identified working knowledge of the product as essential for managerial success.

Heimler (2010) also conducted a quantitative study to examine college graduates, needed, received, and areas for further training based on eight employability dimensions including: (a) literacy and numeracy, (b) critical thinking, (c) management, (d) leadership, (e) interpersonal, (f) information technology, (g) systems thinking skills, and (h) work ethic disposition. The study examined the attitudes of three distinct groups (graduates, faculty, and human resource managers) and their descriptions of skills needed by graduates to succeed in the modern economy. Survey results revealed

that while participants from each of the three groups agreed that basic employability skills are important for job performance, the groups differed in their attitudes regarding graduates' need for additional training in basic employability skills and their level of competency. Faculty and human resource managers believed that graduates required additional training in basic employability skills while graduates felt additional training was not needed. Each study highlights an incongruity in opinion between the individual's perceived levels of competency compared to that of potential employers. Given that employers have the final say regarding who is hired, such an inconsistency in viewpoint regarding level of skill and competency deemed necessary for employees could have major impact on the current and future employability of graduates.

There are many different applications of vocational education. Binici and Arı (2004) pointed out that vocational education need some improvement. While doing these improvements, countries can practice or benefit from other countries vocational education models. As Taspınar (2006) declares vocational education generally is classified into three models; the model based on apprenticeship educational, school-based model and the dual model. He further discusses some other classifications such as a market model, a school model and cooperative (apprenticeship) model. In the market model, vocational education is offered by private industry (Japanese model) whereas in the school model, by the state, especially with the participation of workers, employers and the industry for instance France and Sweden model. In the cooperative model which is called dual system, vocational education is supplied by the school and workplace (German, western European and Southern America model), (Taspınar, 2006). On the basis of the research of Binici et al., (2004) and Taspınar (2006) in this thesis, the models of vocational education of some countries are going to be mentioned. The first model is the Britain model (U.K); In Britain, great deal of

financial support is used for vocational education. According to this model, technological developments propose new demands in business world. UK model is often accepted as more complicated when compared with German and French model. Compulsory education continues until the age of 16. The students then have to choose among the five alternatives; the first is the colleges, offering advanced level vocational technical education. The second is the organizations that offer in service and out-of-service courses. Another is the training programs for the youth. However it is compulsory for each to comply with national vocational standards.

Technical Vocational Education (TVE) is defined as that type of education which fits the individual for gainful employment in recognized career as semi-skilled workers or technicians or sub-professionals (Oni, 2007). According to Maclean and Wilson (2009), TVE is concerned with the acquisition of skills and knowledge for employment and sustainable livelihood. TVE is that aspect of education that exposes the learner to the acquisition of demonstrable skills that could be transformed into economic benefits (Akerele, 2007). It is a planned program of courses and learning experiences that begin with an exploration of career options, supports basic academic and life skills, and enables achievement of high academic standards, leadership, preparation for industry-defined work, and advanced and continuing education (Maclean & Wilson, 2009).

The primary objective of all TVE programs is the acquisition of skills and attitudes for gainful employment in a specific occupation or professional area. The need to link training in TVE to employment either self or paid employment is at the base of all the best practices and approaches observed throughout the world especially in the 21st century. One of the most significant aspects of TVE is its inclination towards the world of work and the emphasis of the curriculum on the acquisition of

employable skills. TVE delivery systems are therefore; well placed to train the skilled workforces that the nation needs to create employment for the youth in order for them to become productive and contribute to the development of their society and the nation at large.

Employability skills must be emphasized in TVE institutions because these skills can accelerate employment among youths and school leavers. Without these skills, youths can be considered handicapped in competing for employment. Kwok (2004) investigated the different effects of various skill requirements with the assumption that employability skills were separate from the actual work contexts in which they are learned and developed.

Kwok found out that the competitiveness of individuals in the labor market depends not only on their vocational competence but also on whether these individuals have employability competences that they can continue to expand. Employability competence must be developed to the extent that an individual can find a suitable job and can acclimatize to social, technological and organizational changes (Burgaz, 2008). Students should acquire employability skills while they are at TVE institutions or in school. The skills can be learned through classroom instruction, in the field or outside the classroom. These skills are abstract in nature and a long time is required to train students to fully acquire employability skills.

According to Knight and Yorke (2004) employability skills, or generic skills, include the achievement, understanding and personal attributes that make an individual willing to work, develop a career and be successful in their employment choices. Based on the factors that contribute to employment, employability skills should be redefined to include both generic skills and technical skills. It may be difficult to become employed with only employability skills; likewise, employers may hesitate to employ

individuals who know how to perform a task but may not be able to contribute to the development of the organization.

Hospitality in Vocational Education

Today, the study of hospitality is considered important due to the fact that it is a vital industry in the service sector. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, hospitality industry is estimated to have a total of 262.6 million jobs which presented the world's workforce by the year 2017 and being one of the most resilient industries in the world (WTTC, 2009). Hence there is an increasing need for the hospitality education sector to provide enough manpower to cater to the ever-changing and demanding industry. Despite the growing focus on hospitality programs which offer a wide diversity of courses throughout the world, there is lack of review on whether the current hospitality education curriculum actually comply with industry expectations. The terms travel and tourism industry and hospitality industry mean the same thing for some people (Nenemeier & Perdue, 2005). They added that, it is basically hard to define in a correct way because of the nature of the works are the same in which providing services to people; service-oriented business. Hence, all organizations that primarily provide lodging or accommodations and foodservices for travelling public or people when they are away from their homes refer the hospitality industry (Nenemeier & Perdue, 2005).

The value of hospitality education eventually runs in line with the expansion of the hospitality industry itself. As a result, the pioneer of hospitality education, Switzerland, started offering the program beginning early 1907. The evolution is followed by Cornell, the first hotel school in the United States which represents hospitality education as a legitimate area since 1922 with the establishment of the School of Hotel Administration (Cornell University, 2004). In Taiwan, the first

hospitality education was introduced in 1966 under the Six-Year National Development Plan (Wei-Lu, 1999). As for Malaysia, hospitality education was introduced in 1967 in the School of Hotel and Tourism Management, University Institute of Technology MARA or recently known as UiTM (Goldsmith & Zahari, 1994).

Hospitality education in the United Kingdom started in 1970s purposely to meet the needs of the British hospitality industry. Due to the market demand, Brazil started its hospitality education back in 1978 with the first hospitality education developed by the Universidade de Caxlas do Sul (Knowles, Teixeira &Egan, 2003). Furthermore, China started introducing the hospitality education also in 1978 with the establishment of Nanjing Tourism School (Tao, 1997). Meanwhile, the Eastern Caribbean Island of Grenada introduced hospitality education program in 2002 in line with the Educational Enhancement and Development 2002-2010 by the Grenada Ministry of Education (McDonald & Hopkin, 2003).

According to Ladki (1993), the main purpose of hospitality education is to educate graduates who possess a wide range of transferable and analytical skills. In fact, as stated by Davies (1994), hospitality education must prepare well qualified graduates to fulfill the demand and changes in the hospitality industry. However, it is noted that the hospitality education programs still cannot keep up with the dramatic changes of the hospitality industry (Haywood, 1989). This finding is supported by Okeiyi, Finley and Postel (1994) where they found that hospitality students were inadequately prepared in some of the managerial skills needed in order to succeed in hospitality industry. In response, the hospitality education curriculum should be designed to cater the needs of the industry, thus several studies have focused on the importance of hospitality education curriculum (Bach & Milman, 1996; Chen, 1996).

Many studies have also stressed on the important skills needed by the hospitality students in order for them to be part of the hospitality industry. Connolly and McGing (2006) suggested that hospitality curriculum and courses must consist of strong practical skills and 'soft' people management skills.

According to Tesone and Ricci (2005), the high turnover rates in the Florida hospitality industry was due to the unrealistic expectations of employees coming from the secondary and higher education programs. They suggested a strong relationship between the hospitality education and industry expectations. Thus, the educational institutions should be more realistic by offering the students high quality of hospitality education which represents the industry needs.

Advanced study on the issue was consequently raised by Zopiatis and Constanti (2007). They determined the quality relationship between the hospitality education and industry in Cyprus through the development of a model which enables hospitality educators to measure the degree with which their hospitality programs meet the demand of the hospitality industry. Other study regarding this matter was undertaken by Lam and Xiao (2000). Their study indicated a reform in the hospitality education due to the rapid development of hospitality and tourism industry in China.

Barrows and Walsh (2002) in their study regarding hospitality education programs and private club industry in Canada emphasized that managers indicate strong relationship between professional career in hospitality industry and hospitality education programs. Previously in another study, Umbreit (1992) emphasized the hospitality education programs must consist of various coursework and professional areas which related to finance, accounting, human resource, leadership, communication and marketing. Responding to this matter, Bach and Milman (1996) developed four clusters of skills which the students of hospitality education must

possess in order for them to become part of the hospitality industry workplace. They suggested the clusters as business functional skills, hospitality functional skills, analytical skills and personal skills.

Employability skills must be emphasized in TVE institutions because these skills can accelerate employment among youths and school leavers. Without these skills, youths can be considered handicapped in competing for employment. Kwok (2004) investigated the different effects of various skill requirements with the assumption that employability skills were separate from the actual work contexts in which they are learned and developed. Kwok found out that the competitiveness of individuals in the labor market depends not only on their vocational competence but also on whether these individuals have employability competences that they can continue to expand. Employability competence must be developed to the extent that an individual can find a suitable job and can acclimatize to social, technological and organizational changes (Burgaz, 2008).

Students should acquire employability skills while they are at TVE institutions or in school. The skills can be learned through classroom instruction, in the field or outside the classroom. These skills are abstract in nature and a long time is required to train students to fully acquire employability skills. According to Knight and Yorke (Omar et al., 2012) employability skills, or 'generic skills, include the achievement, understanding and personal attributes that make an individual willing to work, develop a career and be successful in their employment choices. Based on the factors that contribute to employment, employability skills should be redefined to include both generic skills and technical skills. It may be difficult to become employed with only employability skills; likewise, employers may hesitate to employ individuals who

know how to perform a task but may not be able to contribute to the development of the organization.

This section explains the underlying reasons for continuously revising and updating school curricula to respond to the changing skills demands in the workplace. While there is consensus among researchers on the importance of employability skills in the modern workplace, it is evident from the research that the process for preparing young adults for the world of work should take cognizance of the fact that the workplace is characterized by structural changes, globalization, reorganized work processes, improved technology and an information revolution (Horn, 2006). Considering these external forces affecting the workplace, it is crucial that curricula at VTCs be reviewed on a continuous basis to take into consideration the skills demanded in the workplace.

Curriculum revisions should attempt to achieve goals such as modernizing programs to reflect service-oriented economies, improving skills and competencies and making the curriculum more hands-on, as well as to reflect the trends of the new economy such as e-business, global business and diversity (Academic Leader, 2004, p. 2). According to McGrath et al., (2006, p. 95), a VET curriculum is widely criticized because of out datedness in terms of learning theory and lack of relevance to industry. They further argue that there has been growing acceptance in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region to reform the VET curricula and to make it more responsive to the needs of industry as well as focusing on the promotion of graduates' employability across the region (McGrath et al., 2006).

Defining Skills

Employability skills may be broadly defined as the basic academic, personal and teamwork skills that employers expect from their workers, which are expected to be developed by the educational system.

According to Munro (2007) employability skills involve the ability to contribute to work efficiency in an organization combined with good oral and written communication skills and critical thinking, which form the foundation of both academic and workplace success. Bennett (2006) argued that employability skills include not only the attributes that are desired from prospective employees but also the basic requirements an individual needs to be considered for employment. These skills are required to perform a task efficiently and to contribute to the growth of an organization.

Employability skills are group of skills which help in supporting the ability of an individual to perform effectively in the workplace. It is non-technical skills and sometimes called 'transferable skills' or 'soft skills' or 'generic skills'. The employability skills consists of basic skills, thinking skills, resource skills, information skills, interpersonal skills, system and technology skills and personal qualities (Clarke, 2007). Employability skills are those basic skills necessary for getting, keeping and doing well on a job.

Zinser (2003) stated that employability skills include areas such as managing resources, communication and interpersonal skills, team work and problem-solving and acquiring and retaining a job. Employability skills are those essential skills necessary for getting, keeping, and doing well on a job. These are the skills, attitudes and actions that enable workers to get along with their fellow workers and supervisors and to make sound, critical decisions. Unlike occupational or technical skills,

employability skills are generic in nature rather than job specific and cut across all industry types, business sizes, and job levels from the entry-level worker to the senior-most position. (Robinson & Garton, 2008).

Overtoom (2000) defined employability skills as transferable core skill groups that represent essential functional and enabling knowledge, skills, and attitudes required in the 21st century to function effectively on the job. Overtoom suggested that employability skills are necessary for success in the job market regardless of the employee's chosen career path, employment level, or educational background. Employability skill is a group of important skills instilled in each individual in order to produce productive workforce Overtoom (Kazilan et al., 2009). This is parallel with individuals who have strong characteristics such as a high sense of self innovative, productive, skillful, and competitive, a strong sense of determination, and creative in facing the challenges of the nation as well as globalization in the 21st century. Besides that, employability skill is also crucial in all professions as well as in education. Employability skills are skills that apply across a variety of jobs and life contexts. They are sometimes referred to as key skills, core skills, life skills, essential skills, key competencies, necessary skills, and transferable skills. Workers in the 21st century need skills such as problem-solving and analytic, decision-making, organization and time management, risk-taking, and communication (Lynch, 2000; Robinson et al., 2007; Slusher et al., 2010) to be employable in the workforce. Lynch (2000:7) posited there is a tremendous need to determine what types of skill sets are demanded of TVE graduates by industry because there is a general consensus that occupational preparation should begin sometime in high school.

Employability skills generally refer to those attributes that enable effective teamwork, communication, presentation, leaderships, customer services and innovative problem solving (James & Baldock, 2004). They are not job specific but are valued across a variety of jobs, fields and organizations regardless of position or title. There is no universal acceptable definitive list of soft skills, and there are wide ranges of definitions for soft skills from different countries. The Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education regards it as an inclusive generic skill aspects of cognitive elements associated with non-academic skills, namely positive values, leadership, team coordination, communication and continuous learning. In United Kingdom, it is considered as core skills, key skills and common skills. In New Zealand it is considered as essential skills; in Australia they refer to key competencies, employability skills and generic skills. In USA, soft skills refer to basic skills, necessary skills and workplace knowhow. Specifically, the Ministry of Higher Education has defined and introduced soft skills based on seven dimensions which include communication skills, critical thinking and problem solving, teamwork, lifelong learning and information management, entrepreneurship, ethics and professional moral and leadership. It was found that these dimensions are sought by Malaysian employers, and that they correspond well with the soft skills being implemented in other countries.

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Employability skills have been identified with various terms based on the context. Employability skills are broadly known as generic skills and attributes in many studies. It is believed that these skills or attributes are common and applicable across occupations (Fallows & Steven, 2000). The term employability skills has referred to non-technical, soft skills, and non-cognitive skills. These skills are value-added competencies in combination with academic knowledge and skills in a specific major or area (Zaharim et al., 2010). They have also been known as core or key skills for anyone to possess before entering the workplace (Department of Education, Science and Training of Australia, 2002).

Moreover, employability skills are related to job readiness skills because they are required for individuals in their preparation for employment (Zaharim et al., 2009). Additionally, generalizable skills have been used in CTE to identify employability skills (Greenan, 1986). Generalizable skills have shared some components and

characteristics with employability skills and have similar applications. Employability skills will continue to evolve with respect to their needs, contexts, situations, and applications.

The current trend in Malaysia reveals the lack of employability skills among recent graduates (The Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2012; Tong, 2003; Zaharim et al., 2009). Employers have found that graduates are good technically, but they are weak in non-technical aspects. They can generate engineering solutions to technical problems, but they are unable to present recommended solutions effectively, fail in managing people or human resources, lack confidence in making decisions for an organization, and are unable to communicate well with customers (Bakar & Hanafi, 2007; Kazilan, Hamzah, & Bakar, 2009; Tong, 2003). To bridge the gaps, employers have to expend more resources in retraining employees to support their employability (Juhdi, Pa'Wan, Othman, & Moksin, 2010).

Employers also may consider hiring professional assistance to complete tasks and jobs caused by incompetent graduates. Such extra cost likely contributes to the dissatisfaction with the quality of graduates among employers. There is not only an impact on the employer side, but also the lack of employability skills impedes graduates' short- and long-term career progress (Gurcharan Singh & Garib Singh, 2008). In the short term, graduates may not receive promotions and career advancement. They may take more time to develop their personal skills, personal attributes, and knowledge in the workplace. In the long term, workers who are lacking employability skills may underperform, lack motivation, and be demoralized in their career lives, resulting in leaving challenging jobs and lacking confidence and self-efficacy (Kahn, Abdo, Hewes, McNeil, & Norman, 2011).

The concept of employability skills is broad; it can be adapted and applied to any disciplinary area such as engineering. Based on a proposed perspective from Malaysia, engineering employability skills are abilities to perform engineering-related skills, knowledge, and personal attributes to gain and maintain employment, as well as succeed in the field of engineering (Yusoff et al., 2009; Zaharim, Omar, Basri, Muhamad, & Isa, 2009). These skills are important for engineers, technicians, and technologists in applying a basic understanding of general engineering principles and technical skills.

Currently, Yusoff et al. (2012) proposes that Malaysian Engineering Employability Skills (MEES) be accepted as a formal national framework for engineering-related programs. The MEES framework is continuing to develop and open for discussion. The proposed framework may provide a guideline to generate skilled engineers, technicians, and technologists ready for Malaysian industrial practice. It may assist curriculum developers and researchers to focus crucial factors in preparing high engineering employability skills programs in the future. Moreover, the MEES framework can be used as a quality benchmark for engineering students' achievement in higher education institutions and training centers. Malaysian engineering workers could utilize the proposed MEES framework to upgrade their career growth potential. The proposed MEES framework is grounded by three components: (a) personal attributes, (b) personal skills, and (c) knowledge. These primary components are the integration of 10 individual attributes or skills: communication skills, teamwork, lifelong learning, professionalism, problem-solving and decision-making skills, competence in application and practice, knowledge of science and engineering principles, knowledge of contemporary issues, engineering

system approaches, and competence in specific engineering principles (Yusoff et al., 2012).

These skills are derived from extensive studies, accreditation criteria, and standards by scholars in TVE and engineering education areas. The personal attributes component that influences employability skills is expressed as the integration of five proposed skills: (a) communication skills, (b) teamwork, (c) lifelong learning, (d) professionalism, and (e) problem-solving and decision-making skills. These five personal attributes enable an individual to work effectively with others in the engineering workplace and society at-large (Zaharim et al., 2010). Meanwhile, the personal skills component is comprised of six integrated skills: (a) communication skills, 27 (b) teamwork, (c) problem-solving and decision-making skills, (d) competence in application and practice, (e) engineering system approaches, and (f) competence in specific engineering principles. The personal skills reflect individual abilities to get, keep, and succeed in a regular engineering position (Zaharim et al., 2009). Further, the knowledge component that influences employability skills is outlined as the integration of five proposed skills: (a) lifelong learning, (b) problem-solving and decision-making skills, (c) knowledge of science and engineering principles, (d) knowledge of contemporary issues, and (e) engineering system approaches. These key skills reflect the necessary understanding of scientific and technological principles in the field of engineering (Yusoff et al., 2012).

Husain, Mustapha, Malik and Mokhtar (2014) carried out a study to validate an instrument used to measure employability skills of engineering students. A total of 535 respondents were involved in this study. Ten components were included to measure the employability skills namely: critical thinking and problem solving skills, lifelong learning and information management skills, communication skills, team

work skills, technology utilizing skills, entrepreneurship, leadership, ethics and moral, social skills and spirituality. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to obtain 10 factor solutions using AMOS software. The results showed that the value of Cronbach alpha is higher than 0.80. The results of the second order CFA confirm that the data was fit with the model. It is found that the instrument with 52 items based on 10 factor model can be used to measure the employability skills of engineering students. There were 10 employability skills development constructs. (1) Critical thinking and problem solving skills, (2) Lifelong learning and information management skills, (3) Communication skills, (4) Team work skills, (5) Technology utilizing skills, (6) Entrepreneurship, (7) Leadership, (8) Ethics and moral, (9) Social skills and (10) Spirituality.

In another study, Islam , Abdul Hamid and Abd Manaf (2013) applied importance performance analysis to identify and evaluate the perception of employers towards graduates' employability skills who have has completed their degree in business-related fields (i.e., Business, Economics, Accounting, Finance, Banking, etc.) from schools/faculties of business in Malaysian public universities. Targeted respondents came from organizations listed in the Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers (FMM) and government and semi government agencies. Of the 942 questionnaires mailed, 233 questionnaires were found to be usable for further analysis; giving us a 25% response rate. The results of this study reveal that employers were particularly satisfied with the following attributes: level of keyboard competency, ability to use word processing software, ability to write in Bahasa Malaysia, and the ability to speak in Bahasa Malaysia. In contrast, respondents were least satisfied with the ability to encourage and motivate others, the ability to explore and identify business opportunities, ability to write effectively and speak fluently in English, and the ability

to make logical conclusions. Based on the gap analysis results, 13 attributes are perceived as important by employers, but their satisfaction levels are low. Those attributes are the ability to encourage and motivate others, to manage others, to search for and manage relevant information from various resources, to write effectively in English, to speak fluently in English, to present a project effectively, to express own ideas clearly, effectively, and with confidence; to recognize and analyse problems, to explain, analyse, and evaluate data/information, to generate creative ideas, to think critically, to think out-of-the-box, and to make logical conclusions by analysing relevant data. This suggests that improvement efforts and corrective actions must be taken, in order to improve the overall satisfaction of these 13 attributes. In the new global economy, workers need more than technical knowledge and skills, which are often job-specific and not transferable. In addition to these skills, they must also have soft skills or employability skills if they want to continue contributing to the growth and expansion of an industry or corporation. Employability skills are the skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that enable a person to obtain employment, and to be successful and satisfied in their chosen career (Lorraine & Sewell, 2007). Barnett (2006) explains that employability skills enable people to obtain suitable employment and at the same time develop their careers during social and technological change. Employability skills are necessary across all areas and types of jobs. Alston, Cromartie, Wakefield, and English (2009) studied their importance in the agricultural sector in the U.S, suggesting that interpersonal communication skills, for example, are essential to the technical knowledge and abilities of university graduates in the industry. In addition, these skills are important to employers and employees in developing a company. Technological developments require manufacturers to meet consumers' demands for cheaper and higher quality goods.

Therefore, to remain competitive, front-line workers need to know and apply the technology to solve problems, communicate effectively, work in teams, and assume responsibility for quality and productivity. Hence, tertiary education institutions should provide a curriculum that emphasizes the development of soft skills. Rabey (2008) found that there is room for improvement in the way that secondary schools prepare their students for the workforce, and suggested placing more emphasis on teaching organizational structure and interactions, money management and market dominance, communication, teamwork, and goal setting. These can be boiled down to three important areas: life skills, work skills, and knowledge of the workplace. At the high school level, adolescents between the ages of 16 and 17 years can assess and explore personal interests and needs, particularly in relation to a future career. In psychology, this is the best time to give exposure to the youth about the career world. Sharing knowledge about careers will indirectly strengthen adolescents' desire to continue their studies in technical and vocational schools.

Types of skills

The term employability skills is synonymous with the terms of transferable skills, core competencies, soft skills, non-technical skills, interpersonal skills, and refers to a set of skills, knowledge, and personal values that positively impact an individual's ability to gain employment, succeed, and advance professionally.

These core competencies, beyond subject and technical knowledge and skills, are required in the contemporary workplace and influence career success and satisfaction (Bok, 2006; Gedye et al., 2004; U.S. Department of Labor, 1991). For the purpose of this study, the following skills on which the survey instrument was focused are: communication, conceptual/analytic skills, professional qualities (ethics and self-

management), work culture, teamwork, organization/planning, learning theory and practice, and leadership (Pacheco & UCF, 2008).

The types of the employability skills were discussed as follows. Firstly communication skills. Communication focuses on the gathering and transfer of information through interaction in many diverse forms (Evers et al., 1998; Lussier & Achua, 2007). Communication involves verbal, written, and listening modes. Research shows that all forms of communication are deemed as priorities in employees. Furthermore, research shows substantial evidence that there is a positive relationship between communication competence and satisfactory performance in an organization (Bass, 1990). Second, the Teamwork Skills. The use of teams in the workplace is becoming more and more prevalent. Teamwork is an essential organizational device in that it promotes the understanding of goals, makes efficient use of time, and can result in a higher quality product (Dunne & Rawlins, 2000). Daft argues that companies realize that highly functional teams help deliver quality products, excellent service and customer satisfaction (2005). Third is Problem-solving Skills. Problem-solving is a skill that has been identified as a predictor for effectiveness in an organization (DuBrin, 2005; Zaccaro, Mumford, Connelly, Marks, & Gilbert, 2000). Employers seek employees who are problem solvers (Coplin, 2003; DuBrin, 2007). Problem-solving involves identifying the root problem, choosing a solution, and then implementing that solution. This problem-solving process can be learned. Research calls for a deliberate inclusion of problem-solving skills into the undergraduate curriculum (Sproull, 2001).

Fourth, Initiative and enterprise Skills. This involves being able to see innovative ways of doing things, seizing opportunities, and taking initiative. It may involve a newer way of looking at a situation or the addition of a new idea to improve

or streamline an existing process. Fifth, the Planning and organizing Skills. This involves the ability to identify what is required in a given situation and to manage people and resources effectively to achieve results. It also involves being able to manage time efficiently and priorities what tasks need to be done to achieve an overall goal. Sixth, the Self-management Skills. This skill refers to the ability to take responsibility for your own actions and life direction, and to set goals and successfully achieve them. It involves setting achievable goals and using your time and resources effectively to achieve them.

Seventh, the Technology Skills. This involves being able to keep abreast of current technology and apply it to problems, as well as the ability to embrace life-long learning in the field of technology. Then, the Leadership Skills. According to Sandwith (1993), leadership skills serve as a "strategic link between the conceptual domain and the other domains. Leadership includes empowering others, leading by example, having a vision, coaching, and creating an environment of trust among employees. Next, the Basic skills. According to CEDEFOP (2009), basic skills are defined as skills that individuals require in order to function in the adult world and include skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing and mathematics. Bynner (2002) explored the hypothesis that a lack of basic skills is increasingly related to unemployment in the contemporary UK context. He argued that the transformation or disappearance of whole swathes of industry in the 1970s and 1980s led to a reduction in demand for unskilled manual labor. Under these circumstances, young people who chose not to continue in education but who sought to find jobs in the traditional way post compulsory education found their employment options limited.

Then the Learning How to Learn skills. This skill refers to your ability to manage your own learning and contribute to ongoing improvement and expansion in

your own knowledge and skill set. This also refers to your ability to learn workplace skills and expectations specific to your organization. The Working with others (WWO) skills also have been explained which are working with others is the ability to lead, coordinate or collaborate with others on work activities. We use this skill when we work as a member of a team or jointly with a partner (whether in person or at a distance), and when we engage in supervisory or leadership activities. Next is about the Technical & vocational skills. According to Sandwith (1993) stated that the technical domain refers to the actual work of the organization, the product or services provided by the organization, and the processes or methods involved in completing and evaluating the work. However, the Resource Management Skills is mentioned by Olagunju (2004) as an effective resource management is a priority for all professional services executives looking to optimize profit margins, improve billable utilization, retain top talent, and increase client satisfaction and beyond. At the most basic level, resource management is simply the concept of assigning the right resource, to the right project, at the right time. But to describe it in this manner is to oversimplify the process, and does not address a critical piece of the resource management puzzle skills tracking.

Other skills is Ethical & professional moral skills. According to Sirswal (2010) morals or moral values are generally associated with personal view of values. Which reflect beliefs relating to sex, drinking, gambling, etc. They can reflect the influence of religion, culture, family and friends. Ethics is concerned with how a moral person should behave. Ethical values are beliefs concerning what is morally right and proper as opposed to what is simply correct or effective. Lastly is about the Entrepreneurship Skills. Is the ability to of an individual to exploit an idea and create an enterprise (Small

or Big) not only for personal gain but also for social and developmental gain (Olagunju, 2004)

Skills needed for Hospitality Industry

The Technical and Vocational Education Division (TVED) of the Ministry of Education was established in Malaysia in 1964. It aims to develop technical and vocational education and improve the national education system. In 2002, academic schools (grade 9-10) began offering technical and vocational subjects as elective courses. In 2006, the division implementation competency-based education for vocational subjects using a modular system, and recently some technical and vocational schools have been improved and upgraded to vocational colleges. The aim of these efforts is to enable students to gain employment, start their own business, or pursue training at a higher level to meet the national needs in line with Vision 2020 (Mission, 2020; 2006). To meet this objective, TVED developed a vocational curriculum that features Tech Prep, combining two important elements of articulation and connectedness (Technical and Vocational Curriculum Division, 2007). Articulation provides access to allow students to either pursue their studies at higher levels or seek employment. Connectedness means that what they have learned in school has a relationship with the environment and the actual situation in the workplace. In this context, the elements of employability skills have been promoted through programs such as industrial attachment, school enterprise and traineeship programs (Ahmad-Tajudin, 2009). Recently, the Ministry of Education Malaysia has upgraded some of the technical and vocational schools to college status, and as of 2013, there are 56 Vocational Colleges. Beginning in July of 2013, the ministry will collaborate with the Industrial Training Institutes, under the purview of Ministry of Human Resource, to jointly implement College Vocational programs at 11 Industrial

Training Institutes. At the school level, the development and assessment of employability skills is assessed by Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) (Maclean & Ordonez, 2007).

It is agreeable that the tourism and hospitality education programs must have specialized courses which provide students with specific interest area in the industry complying with the Accreditation Commission for Programs in Hospitality Administration (ACPHA) 1992.

A recent study stated the local Malaysian universities are still lacking relevant soft skills competencies which lead to their unemployment in a highly competitive job market. (Hairi, Ahmad Toee & Razzaly, 2011). In 1993, the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism (MOCAT) Malaysia has embarked on the development of National Occupational Skill Standard (NOSS) which comprising of 33 job areas in the hotel industry, 30 job areas in the tourism and travel sector, eight job areas in the theme park sector and six job areas in the recreational scuba diving. The purpose of NOSS for the tourism and hospitality industry is to assist training institutions in preparing competent persons to meet actual job requirements. Hence it must be noted that the designing of the program is only to make vocational and skill training in Malaysia more relevant to industry's needs regardless of the customers and general public overall improvement in the quality of services. With so many institutions in Malaysia offering the program, the quality of the curriculum structure has become major issue in the tourism and hospitality education. Therefore, the competencies required by the industry need to be compiled into the curriculum as to produce quality graduates. Thus, a study was conducted to develop a standard index to measure the competencies of tourism and hospitality graduates as requested by the industry.

It is increasingly becoming evident that employability skills make it easier to obtain employment, to remain in it and to adapt easily to the changing demands of the labor market (Riordan & Rosas, 2003). Employers today are looking for workers who are knowledgeable, who get along well with other people, who are able to work as part of a team, who are dependable and reliable, who are eager to learn and who have good written and oral communication skills. Murnane and Levy (2001) use the words 'competencies' and 'skills' synonymously and have identified the following six key competencies critical to economic success:

- basic reading and mathematics skills;
- the ability to communicate effectively;
- the organization of work within firms;
- teamwork
- familiarity with computers
- formal educational credentials

Kelly (2007) has identified the following employability skills that make individuals flexible, adaptable and mobile in the labor market

- communication
- information technology
- working with numbers
- working with others
- problem solving
- improving your own learning and performance

According to Pretorius (2001), the skills sought by employers in the workplace include proficiency in mathematics, computing, reading, writing and reasoning, the ability to use resources and information constructively, interpersonal skills, the ability

to understand systems and master technology, as well as the flexibility to cope with changes in the workplace.

Secretary Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) in 1990, the Secretary of Labor appointed a commission to determine the skills young people need to succeed in the world of work. According to the United States Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, the commission's fundamental purpose was to encourage a high-performance economy characterized by high-skill, high-wage employment. As part of its job, the commission was asked to define 20 skills needed for employment; propose acceptable levels of proficiency; suggest effective ways to assess proficiency; and develop a dissemination strategy for the nation's schools, businesses, and homes (U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, 2005).

Prior to the commission's appointment, there was an intense national debate about education and training, their purposes, and the progress in those areas. Acknowledging that each entity had its place was not a problem. The issue that concerned legislators, educators, and business and community leaders was what part should each play. They were all considered an intricate player in the broad spectrum of how to link education to the real world of work. All seek a particular kind of learner, one who can put knowledge and skills into practice as a productive worker, a responsible citizen, and a more complete human being (Brock, 1998).

After talking with businesses, the Commission found that employers and business owners want people who can put knowledge to work. They want people who are creative and responsible problem solvers with skills they can build on (SCANS, 2000; 1991). SCANS also reported on how schools prepare young people for work. In the past, the idea of competition from abroad was not an issue that manufactures had

to contend with. Competition for goods and services were relegated to American soil only, and the technology of mass production emphasized discipline to the assembly line. However, today the world market has changed and global competition is much more of a concern for businesses and employers. The Commission states that schools must prepare students to meet the challenges of world class standards. Students must be prepared to adapt to changes on the job, and must have the ability to learn and work in teams (SCANS, 2000; 1991). With all the reports produced and the research that SCANS conducted, the Commission did not passively comment on how each entity should address the issue of workplace know how. It went to great lengths to categorize specific competencies and foundation skills to help employers and educators define those skills needed for students to achieve solid job performances.

Regardless of where students go after completing the requirements for graduation, they should leave with basic skills and the know-how they need to succeed. According to the Commission, high performance should be the standard for all areas of community operations. Schools and businesses should expect their students and employers to be able to make mature responsible decisions. If decisions have to be made immediately, employers should not expect upper level management to intercede. If this happens, upper level management would have to spend precious time evaluating the situation, and then having it evaluated by another person in the chain of command before the customer will receive satisfaction or restitution. This could place the company or firm at a disadvantage, costing the firm a great deal of money in production costs and time management. However, if decisions are made closer to the front line, and employers draw upon their abilities to think creatively and solve problems, companies and firms could maximize production costs and managerial functions.

The skills identified by SCANS (2000; 1991) are ones parents, educators, and employers should use to strengthen students skills, which will assist in preparing students for employment. The workplace know-how skills are broken down into two categories. First, there is the competency category. This particular category has five areas that students need to master. They are resources, interpersonal skills, information, systems, and technology. Second, there are the foundation competencies which require basic skills, thinking skills, and personal qualities. Parents must insist that their children master workplace know-how, and that their local schools teach it. Parents should be aware that if their children do not master these skills, students' chances for gainful employment are bleak. SCANS (2000; 1991) reported that educators are in a position to influence and inform students about workplace know-how standards. There are three things that educators can do to help promote workplace know-how. First, they can tell students what the standards are. Second, they can assess the students, and let them know how proficient they are in relation to the standards. Last, they can incorporate workplace know-how in their curriculum and day to day classroom operations.

Also, they will allow students from all academic levels the benefit of experiencing these competencies and foundation skills. Just because a student is succeeding academically does not mean he/she cannot benefit from workplace know-how. Employers must familiarize their business practices to hiring and developing these competencies and foundation skills in their employees. If employers do not incorporate these skills as part of their training programs, they face the risk of having low quality workers without the possibility of ever having better ones, and to add, chances of them ever having a competent workforce are limited.

The importance of employability skills as opposed to specific skills is clearly underscored by the United States of America's Secretary's Commission for Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) report (Department of Labor, 1991), which recommends specific competencies and skills required from someone entering the labor market. The SCANS Report (Department of Labor, 1991) identified the following competencies and foundation skills which are essential for successful employment:

Competencies – effective workers can use these productively:

- resources – allocating time, money, material, space and staff;
- interpersonal skills – working in teams, teaching others, servicing customers, leading, negotiating and working well with people from culturally diverse backgrounds;
- information – acquiring and evaluating data, organizing and maintaining files,
- interpreting and communicating, and using computers to process information
- systems – understanding social, organizational and technological systems, monitoring and correcting performance, and designing or improving systems
- technology – selecting equipment and tools, applying technology to specific tasks and maintaining and troubleshooting technologies

Foundation skills – here competence requires:

- basic skills – reading, writing, arithmetic and mathematics, speaking and listening;
- thinking skills – thinking creatively, making decisions, solving problems, seeing things in the mind's eye, knowing how to learn and reason
- personal qualities – individual responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management and integrity

Ideally, students of tourism and hotel management programs should, among other things, be able demonstrate good communication skills and be able to think critically. Generally, there are four clusters of skills in the tourism and hospitality industry (Bach & Milman, 1996; Lu, 1999). The first cluster of skills are: a) business functional areas – accounting, finance, marketing and tourism and hospitality functional areas – accommodation, food service, tourism and travel; b) personal skills - leadership, communication, teamwork, language, problem solving; and c) analytical Journal of Tourism, Volume XII, No. 1, 2011 (11) Jennifer Kim Lian Chan and conceptual skills and practical work experience - internship/handson experiences, technical and human skills. However, it was found that students generally lack higher order thinking skills. This is due mainly to the curriculum design and teaching and learning methods within the hotel management program which do not permit student exposure to the higher order thinking skills. Basically, the attainment of personal skills and practical work experience are the two most important skills outlined in the program and course learning outcomes. The critical thinking element is not emphasized in any course outcomes since this is not deemed as a compulsory skill within the hotel industry. However, higher order thinking skills prepare graduates to become effective managers in the later part of their careers, and may be useful in line with the highly competitive and globalized business environment. It is suggested that the project–based learning method is suitable to acquire critical thinking skills as the project is set to engage students in making analysis, synthesis and evaluation of the activities performed.

Determinants and Importance of employability skills

Employability skills have also been explained as a set of skills, understandings, and personal attributes that make a job seeker more likely to gain employment and be

successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, community, and economy (Yorke, 2004). Moreover, employability skills are "transferable core skill groups that represent essential functional and enabling knowledge, skills, and attitudes required by the 21st century workplace" (Overtoom, 2000). These skills are necessary for career success at all levels of employment and for all levels of education. These definitions suggest that employability skills are developed in school and throughout one's career. Furthermore, the term employability skills has been viewed from numerous perspectives. From the employer perspective, employability skills are appropriate skills and attributes that may help potential job seekers become employed (Curtis & McKenzie, 2002). They also mention that unemployed persons perceive employability skills as enabling support or a contract for accepting a specific job. However, this perception may be varied and changing depending on the situation. Meanwhile, student and lecturer definitions of employability skills are different. Graduates identify employability skills as higher order thinking skills in coordination with affective skills and traits required to obtain a job (Wickramasinghe & Perera, 2010). Moreover, from the student perspective, employability skills are basic core skills that help employees to complete their tasks successfully. Therefore, there is no exclusively descriptive definition of employability skills since the term can be applied to multiple situations and contexts. Employability skills are accepted as particular types of demands or attributes, or personal abilities that may vary across environment, time, culture, purpose, and the workplace (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005). The core competencies required in all work settings. The Conference Board of Canada's Employability Skills Profile identifies three critical skills: academic, personal management and teamwork. Employability skills can be defined as a range of abilities or competencies that you may develop during your life

through your education, training, work experience, interests and extra-curricular activities. They are sometimes referred to as generic skills, life skills, core skills, essential employment skills, key competencies or transferable skills.

Employability skills have been identified with various terms based on the context. Employability skills are broadly known as generic skills and attributes in many studies. It is believed that these skills or attributes are common and applicable across occupations (Fallows & Steven, 2000). The term employability skills has referred to non-technical, soft skills, and non-cognitive skills. These skills are value-added competencies in combination with academic knowledge and skills in a specific major or area (Zaharim et al., 2010). They have also been known as core or key skills for anyone to possess before entering the workplace (Department of Education, Science and Training of Australia, 2002).

Moreover, employability skills are related to job readiness skills because they are required for individuals in their preparation for employment (Zaharim et al., 2009). Additionally, generalizable skills have been used in CTE to identify employability skills (Greenan, 1986). Generalizable skills have shared some components and characteristics with employability skills and have similar applications.

Core employability skills build upon and strengthen those developed through basic education, such as reading and writing, the technical skills needed to perform specific duties, such as nursing, accounting, using technology or driving a forklift and professional/personal attributes such as honestly, reliability, punctuality, attendance and loyalty. Core work skills enable individuals to constantly acquire and apply new knowledge and skills, they are also critical to lifelong learning.

Competency was defined by Mulder (2001) which refers more about potential or qualification. More and more, the emphasis lies on the application of potential knowledge and skills to a work situation. Sandberg (2000) also point out in his interpretative approach to human competence at work that it bears upon the knowledge and skills people use when working. Competency and skills were interpreted with a different approach. Skill concerns the execution of a single task, while competence deals more with the execution of a whole series of different tasks in a certain (occupational) domain, all of them performed well and in coherence or integrated (Mulder, 2001). According to Somalingam and Shanthakumari (2013) in Marzanoz's (1993), the dimensions of learning were on three taxonomy of competencies; namely, attitudes and perceptions, productive habits of mind and meaningful usage, extension and acquisition of knowledge. They also cited the work of Bordogna (1996) identified integration, analysis, innovation and synthesis, and contextual understanding as key capabilities for engineering students. It also identified the following primary competencies for engineers.

The role of lifelong learning in this dynamic and ever-changing world due to globalization and the emergence of new technologies should never be overlooked. Because of these phenomena, workers today are faced with many challenges in the workplace and are required to continue upgrading and updating their skills and competencies in order to remain productive in their places of work.

The success of nations in the 21st century will depend on each nation's ability to educate its citizens for the entire existence of their life. Lifelong learning thus comprises basic education, adult education, in-service training, formal and informal education and labor market training (Borgir & Peltzer, 1999).

Lifelong learning is defined by the International Labor Organization (2000, p. 3) as a purposeful learning process that is formal, non-formal or informal, as opposed to day-to-day learning that all people engage in throughout their lives. Aspin and Chapman (2001, p. 1) asserts that lifelong learning is vital in developing skills and competencies of workers on a continuous basis due to rapid changing demands of new technologies and working processes taking place at a workplace.

One can therefore argue that lifelong learning signifies learning that takes place inside or outside traditional educational settings. The pace at which technology is changing in the workplace as demands for new sets of skills grow requires from workers that they learn continuously, irrespective of where such learning takes place. Lifelong learning should thus create adequate education and training opportunities for adults in a working environment to promote a learning culture so that individuals can gain the knowledge, skills and attitudes to fulfill their life aspirations.

Most colleges had taken a holistic approach to developing a range of key skills for learners within programs. They had not viewed skills for citizenship as a bolt-on to the curriculum but had worked to embed these specific skills into the broader skill mix, including core skills and skills for employability. Most colleges had developed effective strategies and methods for core skills development and delivery. Each of the core skills – communication, numeracy, information technology, working with others and problem solving, lent themselves particularly well to integration with skills for citizenship. Most colleges had responded well to developing opportunities and activities to support skills that would further enhance employment. The vocational nature of many college programs provided appropriate platforms on which to develop additional skills pertinent to industry. HMIE reviews in 2004/05 confirmed many

aspects of these developments under learning and teaching processes and reported that in many colleges' staff:

- set suitably challenging standards for learners that were clearly linked to industry expectations.
- Encouraged learners to develop reflective thinking and creative skills and be independent in their approach to learning. In the same period, reviews of learner progress and outcomes confirmed two key themes.
- Learners generally made good progress from their prior achievements and were developing appropriate knowledge and skill.
- Wider achievement, particularly in industry-recognized awards, helped learners improve their employability skills. Given this emphasis on assisting learners to develop the necessary skills for employment, many colleges had integrated skills for citizenship alongside those for employability. There was a general view that to be effective, skills for citizenship needed to be presented to learners in the context of core skills and skills for employability. Learners were more likely to be active participants in many aspects of society if they had the range of skills necessary to enter employment and engage in community, cultural and democratic processes.

Learning outcomes can be classified into groups called domains and in relation to the skills, knowledge and understanding required for the workplace, these can be summarized as:

- knowledge and understanding of your specialist area – the cognitive domain
- application of that knowledge through skills applied in the workplace – the psychomotor domain

- personal skills and qualities required to be a productive team member, creative problem solver and employee – the affective domain

Learning outcomes that deal with attitudes, qualities, motivation, willingness to participate, valuing what is learned and incorporating values into a way of life all belong to the affective domain. A successful learning in employability involves development of positive behaviors underpinned by personal, learning and thinking skills, these resources target learning in the affective domain. The process involves several developmental stages that, ideally, need to be applied in a range of learning activities and situations.

Theories of Employability Skills

There are several theories have been used in this research. First, Mayer Committee (1992), then Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA, 2002) also the Model of Core Competencies by Jelas et al., (2006).

The Mayer Committee defined these key competencies as an essential for effective participation in the emerging patterns of work and work organization. They focus on the capacity to apply knowledge and skills in an integrated way in work situations. Key competencies are generic in that they apply to work generally rather than being specific to work in particular occupations or industries. Based on The Mayer Committee (1992), this characteristic means that the key competencies are not only essential for participation in work, but are also essential for effective participation in further education and in adult life more generally.

According to Department of Education, Science and Training (2002) in the 2002 report, Employability Skills for the Future, prepared for the then Department of Education, Science and Training by the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Business Council of Australia, adopted the following definition of

employability skills: Employability skills are defined as 'skills required not only to gain employment but also to progress within an enterprise so as to achieve one's potential and contribute successfully to enterprise strategic directions.

The report also devised an 'Employability Skills Framework' which built on the Mayer Key Competencies and identified a range of employability skills and personal attributes. The framework identified eight employability skills:

- communication skills that contribute to productive and harmonious relations between employees and customers;
- team work skills that contribute to productive working relationships and outcomes;
- problem-solving skills that contribute to productive outcomes;
- initiative and enterprise skills that contribute to innovative outcomes;
- planning and organizing skills that contribute to long-term and short-term strategic planning;
- self-management skills that contribute to employee satisfaction and growth;
- learning skills that contribute to ongoing improvement and expansion in employee and company operations and outcomes; and
- Technology skills that contribute to effective execution of tasks.
- Later on, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA, 2002) defined communication, IT, application of number, working with others, improving own learning and performance and problem solving specifically as QCA skills. However refer to the vision and mission of higher education in ASIA, the model of core competencies by Jelas et al. (2006) is considered as most appropriate model of core competencies. The core competencies namely communication skills, numeracy skills, IT skills, learning how to learn skills,

problem solving skills, working with other skills, and subject specific core competencies skills.

Comparative Employability Skills by Country

Table 2.3 below presents a comparative analysis of employability skills found in Australia, United Kingdom, and United States of America also in Malaysia.

Table 2.3
Comparative tables of employability skills by country

Australian Mayer key competencies	**United Kingdom (NCVQ) core skills**	**United Kingdom (NCVQ) core skills**	**Malaysia (MOHE)**
Collecting, analyzing and organizing information	Communication	Information Foundation skills Basic skills	communication skills
Communicating ideas and information	Communication Personal skills Improving own performance and learning	Information Foundation skills Basic skills	critical thinking and problem solving
Planning and organizing activities	Personal skills Improving own performance and learning	Resources Foundation skills Personal abilities	teamwork, lifelong learning and information
Working with others and in teams	Personal skills Working with others	Interpersonal skills	management
Using mathematical ideas and techniques	Numeracy Application of numbers	Foundation skills Basic skills	ethics and professional moral
Solving problems	Problem solving	Foundation skills Thinking	entrepreneurship
Using technology	Information technology	Technology systems	and leadership

Source: Adapted from Werner (1995, p. 38)

The findings on employability skills developed by the various countries studied above reveal common trends in the employability skills sought by employers in the respective countries. Employability skills such as problem solving, working in teams, managing information, numeracy, communication and using technology all feature as

important in the workplace and represent those skills that employers require these from workers.

Summary

In the previous chapter which is chapter one provides an overview of this thesis. The chapter presents the background to the research, a discussion of the research problem and research questions, the objectives of the research, the theoretical framework and the research methodology. This chapter also provides a brief discussion of the justification for the research and the contributions of the research, and the research limitations. The chapter concludes with definitions of key terms. This chapter provided a review of literature related to the critical problem of skills and proficiencies development required of the curriculum that prepares students for success in the workplace. The chapter explored the skill needs and expectations employers have of recent vocational college graduates they employ, including the current employability readiness of graduates and the role of previous work experience in students' skill development. In addition, the chapter provided the theoretical framework for the study. Next chapter discussed the methodology of the research. It explains the methods of the study. Basically, this chapter presents the skeleton of the research by reflecting the research question and objectives, followed by the research design and research method. Finally, it also involves the data gathering process accompanying the instrument to be applied as well as the outline of the data analysis.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

Introduction

This chapter explains the methods of the study. Basically this chapter presents the skeleton of the research by reflecting the research question and objectives, followed by the research design and research method. Finally, it also involves the data gathering process accompanying the instrument to be applied as well as the outline for the data analysis. The purpose of this study is to explore the development of employability skills among vocational students in Malaysia. The following objectives were formulated to accomplish the purpose of this study. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the objectives of the study are:

1. To identify the perceived level of competency on a let of identified employment skills among vocational students majoring in hospitality
2. To examine the differences in competency perceived level by gender for vocational students majoring in hospitality
3. To identify the differences in competency perceived level between rural and urban vocational students majoring in hospitality
4. To examine the determinants of perceived level in employability skills among bakery vocational students majoring in hospitality
5. To examine the determinants of perceived level in employability skills among culinary vocational students majoring in hospitality
6. To identify the differences in competency perceived level between importance and competence of employability skills among bakery vocational students majoring in hospitality

7. To identify the differences in competency perceived level between importance and competence of employability skills among culinary vocational students majoring in hospitality
8. To examine the skills that are perceived by students for entering the hospitality profession

Epistemology. Epistemology as a way of understanding and explaining what we know and how we know it (Crotty, 1998). He added that epistemology represents the philosophical grounding for our knowledge. Meaning is built from the overall human experience as well as the personal experience of the researcher.

This study follows the precepts of a constructivist epistemology. Creswell (2009) stated constructivism is the process of individuals seeking to understand the world in which they work and live. He postulated that meaning was assigned by the researcher using past experience and cultural/sociological underpinnings. Crotty (1998) identified several assumptions related to constructivism:

- Meanings are constructed by human beings making sense of the world they live in
- Humans use historical and social perspectives to interpret their world, and
- Qualitative research is largely inductive with the researcher generating meaning from the collected data.

Crotty pointed out that constructivism downplays human knowledge and therefore

builds knowledge from the researcher's perspective. This implies the resulting analysis reflects the researcher's own reality. Creswell (1998) further stated that in constructivism the researchers must reduce the distance between themselves and the

research to fully understand the meaning of the research data. In this study, the researcher researched the participants in vocational colleges in Malaysia.

As discussed below, the method that used to undertake this research was a mixed methods approach. The prior to identifying the methodological approach, it is generally necessary to understand the paradigm of the researcher through ontology and epistemology (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). However, as Marshall (1996) stated that the research methods should be determined by the research question, not by the preference of the researcher. For this reason the use of a mixed method approach in this research helped determine the paradigm: pragmatism.

The study done by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) mentioned that pragmatism is a deconstructive paradigm that debunks concepts such as truth and reality and focuses instead on what works as the truth regarding the research questions under investigation. They also stated that the pragmatism rejects the either choices associated with the paradigm wars, advocates for the use of mixed methods in research, and acknowledges that the values of the researcher play a larger role in interpretation of results

In research, Mason (2002) states that there is a need to answer the question what are the ontological position or perspective. This question looks at what the nature of reality is (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Briefly the ontology of pragmatism is that there are single and multiple realities that exist (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This means that researchers look at multiple perspectives of the phenomenon that is being researched (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Following ontology is epistemology which is the second important question to answer when undertaking research (Mason, 2002).

Epistemology is the theory of knowledge, and should therefore concern the principles and rules by which you decide whether and how social phenomena can be known, and how knowledge can be demonstrated (Mason, 2002). Epistemological views of some writers do not believe that such a combination of mixed methods can occur whereas; a technical view believes that it can (Bryman, 2008). The epistemology behind this idea has been identified by seven claims.

The first is that there is not one system of philosophy and reality and this then allows qualitative and quantitative methods to be used (Creswell, 2003). The second allows for the researcher to have freedom in choosing methods that are appropriate for the purpose (Creswell, 2003). This research topic is most often explored using a quantitative method in other contexts other than New Zealand, by utilizing a pragmatic methodology the merits of a mixed method approach can be taken advantage of. The third claim is that unity does not exist in the world in the mind of pragmatists; instead they use more than one way to undertake research (Creswell, 2003). Further to this point, the fourth claim is that using qualitative and quantitative research methods allows the best understanding of the question to be found (Creswell, 2003). The fifth states that those that undertake mixed methods research must establish a purpose for their mixing, a rationale for the reasons why quantitative and qualitative data needs to be mixed in the first place (Creswell, 2003). This thesis utilizes a mixed method approach in line with the fourth claim where the research topic can be best explored using this method. Also, such a study has not been undertaken in a New Zealand context previously, therefore, this thesis aims to discover both quantitative findings supported by the opinions of respondents to fully understand the research topic.

The sixth claim is that research always occurs in social, historical, political and other contexts (Creswell, 2003). The final claim is that questions about reality and the laws of nature need to stop (Creswell, 2003). The author of this thesis has chosen the method used based on the needs of the research questions, which supports the third claim from Creswell (2003). As well as this using both quantitative and qualitative research methods allowed for the best understanding of the research questions, because quantitative data can seek out trends in students' perceptions whereas, qualitative information can provide reasons for these perceptions (Finn, Elliott White, & Walton, 2000; Walle, 1997).

Whilst not all authors believe that qualitative and quantitative research should be used together and some believe that they can be used together but should be kept separate, other authors suggest they can be combined using one or more paradigms (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). As such, the author of this thesis followed the version that suggests that combining qualitative and quantitative research is possible using one paradigm. Pragmatism is, therefore, the one paradigm that allows for both qualitative and quantitative research methods to be integrated (Rossman & Wilson, 1985).

The research questions helped to determine the method used for this research. The strategy that was utilized in this thesis was concurrent triangulation (Creswell, 2003). Using a mixed method approach allowed for raw data to be collected and in depth opinions to be sought (Finn, et al., 2000). Mixing methods allows for the strengths and weaknesses of each individual method (quantitative and qualitative) to be offset, this is known as triangulation. The section below outlines the strengths and weaknesses of each approach linking them together and discussing triangulation briefly.

Triangulation. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods is not as common as using a single method. There are many arguments over which method is better when undertaking research. Quantitative and qualitative research methods are both considered useful and legitimate in the study of tourism (Walle, 1997). Superiority of one over the other should not exist in the minds of researchers (Finn et al., 2000). However, qualitative research has been overshadowed by the use of quantitative methods since the late 1940's (Walle, 1997). It is argued that qualitative methods allow hypotheses to be created which can then be tested using quantitative methods (Walle, 1997). But there has been much criticism given to quantitative or scientific methods which has led to qualitative research becoming increasingly common, particularly for marketing and tourism academics (Walle, 1997).

Furthermore, quantitative research methods are not always suited to the research goals (Finn et al., 2000). Walle (1997) adds that qualitative methods are now supplementing quantitative methods and have increasingly done so since the early 1980's. With the rise of mixed methods in social science research and the identification that triangulation as a strategy is being used, it is necessary to understand the advantages and disadvantages of both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Mixed methods is the collection or analysis of both quantitative and/or qualitative data in a single study in which the data are collected concurrently or sequentially, are given priority, and involve the integration of the data at one or more stages in the process of research (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). Using mixed methods is valuable in research (Axinn, 2006) from which triangulation highlights the benefits. As identified earlier, this method used triangulation as the strategy behind mixing methods where combining methods allowed the weaknesses of each method to be offset so that the methods became complementary and therefore

strengthened the research (Axinn, 2006; Finn, et al., 2000). Triangulation is where quantitative research is used to corroborate qualitative research or vice versa (Bryman, 2008). Triangulation can be separated into four types. This thesis employed method triangulation which uses qualitative and quantitative research methods in conjunction with each other (Decrop, 2004).

Triangulation allows for the validity of the findings to be enhanced because they are able to support each other (Bryman, 1988; Erzberger & Kelle, 2003). Erzberger and Kelle (2003) sum up the benefits of using triangulation in stating that, the use of different methods to investigate a certain domain of social reality can be compared with the examination of a physical object from two different viewpoints or angles. Both viewpoints provide different pictures of this object that might not be useful to validate each other but that might yield a fuller and more complete picture of the phenomenon concerned if brought together. Empirical research results obtained with different methods are like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that provide a full image of a certain object if put together in the correct way.

Method triangulation increases the credibility and dependability of information (Decrop, 1999; 2004). The key is convergence where conclusions that are drawn are more sound and valid (Decrop, 1999). The benefits of triangulation are clearly stated in emphasizing that the complete picture can be sought by offsetting the weaknesses of individual methods. This strategy works with the ideas of pragmatism that allow for the methods to be mixed where traditionally this would not have occurred. To end this chapter an understanding of the stages of the research will be discussed; firstly the quantitative methods used and secondly the qualitative methods used. The research was undertaken concurrently however, attention was paid to the trends that were

occurring in the quantitative research to enhance the questions, and hence the findings, of the qualitative section in seeking a fuller understanding of the research questions.

Research process used in this study. Using the four elements of research outlined by Crotty (1998) this study planned can be summarized as being focused on a constructivist epistemology, based on interpretivist-phenomenology theoretical perspective with an action research methodology and a case study research method.

Research Design

The study is a mixed approach research design that uses both quantitative and qualitative methodology. According to Creswell (2012), the mixed methodology approach requires a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data collection procedure and analysis at the different stage of the research process. A mixed methods study encompasses both qualitative and quantitative studies (Bryman, 2012). The appropriateness of a mixed methods study involves the need to address different research questions, while employing an empirical approach to strengthen the study by moderating natural weaknesses of single-method approaches. The Journal of Mixed Methods (2006), in its call for papers defines mixed methods as research in which the investigator collects, analyses, mixes, and draws inferences from both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or a program of inquiry. A more comprehensive definition is provided by Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) mentioned that: Mixed methods research is a research design with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry. As a methodology, it involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems that either approach alone.

Teddlie and Tashakkori (2010) stated that mixed method as: The broad inquiry logic that guides the selection of specific methods and that is informed by conceptual positions common to mixed methods practitioners (for example the rejection of either-or" choices at all levels of the research process). The challenges of undertaking mixed methods research through a conceptual framework referred to as the Five Ps of mixed methods research. The Five Ps tend to cover the key categories of challenges that arise from mixed methods research designs. They include philosophical considerations and approaches, as well as methodological choices and processes, competencies, practicalities and political considerations. Several mixed methods proponents acknowledge the challenges that face those embarking on mixed methods research (Mingers, 2001; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003; Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). Mingers (2001) described in detail four types of barriers to mixed method research design. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) identified six continuing points of controversy in mixed methods design and expanded this in 2010 to nine important issues or controversies in contemporary MMR (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2007) refer to four major crises to mixed methods research and indicate how each if these crises can inform considerations of sampling design. The four crises are representation; legitimation; integration; and politics.

Brannen (2005) refered to the three Ps' when she detailed the rationales behind the choice of research method in general. The Brannen three Ps include: paradigms; pragmatics and; politics. The Five Ps framework includes; Paradigms; Pragmatism; Praxis; Proficiency and; Publishing.

Paradigms. Methodological choice does not exist within a philosophical void and Brannen (2005) views the choice of methods as being driven by philosophical (ontological and epistemological) assumptions. There are many definitions of a

paradigm and three are offered here. A paradigm is a way of looking at the world. It is composed of certain philosophical assumptions that guide and direct thinking and action (Mertens, 2005).

Neuman (2006) refers to paradigm as a general organizing framework for theory and research that includes basic assumptions, key issues, models of quality research, and methods for seeking answers.

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) describe paradigm as follows, the net that contains the researcher's epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises may be termed a paradigm. All research is interpretive; it is guided by the researcher's set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied". Inconsistency is evident across the literature on how paradigms are dichotomized, polarized, labelled, and at what level of abstraction they are discussed.

Nonetheless, there are sufficient levels of common ground to enable the drawing of parallels and connections between these, and the labels assigned to them. It is very important that the paradigm(s) upon which a research proposal and design is based are fully understood and made explicit in the research itself (Maxwell, 2005; Mertens, 2005; Neuman, 2006).

This is not necessarily a matter of free choice and may require the researcher to examine some previously unexamined assumptions or personal theories (Maxwell, 2005; Mertens, 2005).

Epistemology basic is a branch of philosophy that investigates the origin, nature, methods, and limits of human knowledge. Such beliefs influence the development of knowledge because they are considered to be the central values or

theories that are functionally connected to most other beliefs and knowledge (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997).

Pragmatism. The second of the Five Ps of mixed methods research is pragmatism. Pragmatism in its simplest sense is a practical approach to a problem and has strong associations with mixed methods research. Pragmatism can be considered a bridge between paradigm and methodology or what Greene and Caracelli (2003) refer to as a particular stance at the interface between philosophy and methodology. Pragmatism has a strong philosophical foothold in the mixed methods or methodological pluralism camps. This can present challenges for the mixed methods researcher in terms of claims that pragmatism is eclectic. It is very important for the mixed methods researcher to acknowledge these criticisms and rigorously defend pragmatic approaches and choices.

For pragmatists, only those things that are experienced or observed are real. In this late 19th century American philosophy, the focus is on the reality of experience. Unlike the Realists and Rationalists, Pragmatists believe that reality is constantly changing and that we learn best through applying our experiences and thoughts to problems, as they arise. The universe is dynamic and evolving, a becoming view of the world. There is no absolute and unchanging truth, but rather, truth is what works. Pragmatism is derived from the teaching of Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), who believed that thought must produce action, rather than linger in the mind and lead to indecisiveness.

John Dewey (1859-1952) applied pragmatist philosophy in his progressive approaches. He believed that learners must adapt to each other and to their environment. Schools should emphasize the subject matter of social experience. All learning is dependent on the context of place, time, and circumstance. Different

cultural and ethnic groups learn to work cooperatively and contribute to a democratic society. The ultimate purpose is the creation of a new social order. Character development is based on making group decisions in light of consequences.

For Pragmatists, teaching methods focus on hands-on problem solving, experimenting, and projects, often having students work in groups. Curriculum should bring the disciplines together to focus on solving problems in an interdisciplinary way. Rather than passing down organized bodies of knowledge to new learners, Pragmatists believe that learners should apply their knowledge to real situations through experimental inquiry. This prepares students for citizenship, daily living, and future careers.

Praxis. Praxis may be described as a form of critical thinking and comprises the combination of reflection and action. Praxis can be viewed as a progression of cognitive and physical actions:

- Taking the action
- Considering the impacts of the action
- Analysing the results of the action by reflecting upon it
- Altering and revising conceptions and planning following reflection
- Implementing these plans in further actions

This creates a cycle which can be viewed in terms of educational settings, learners and educational facilitators. Scott and Marshall (2009) refer to praxis as "a philosophical term referring to human action on the natural and social world". Furthermore, Gramsci (1999) emphasises the power of praxis in Selections from the Prison Notebooks by stating that the philosophy of praxis does not tend to leave the simple in their primitive philosophy of common sense but rather to lead them to a higher conception of life. To reveal the inadequacies of religion, folklore,

intellectualism and other such one-sided forms of reasoning, Gramsci appeals directly in his later work to Marx's philosophy of praxis, describing it as a 'concrete' mode of reasoning. This principally involves the juxtaposition of a dialectical and scientific audit of reality; against all existing normative, ideological, and therefore counterfeit accounts.

Once a researcher has positioned themselves paradigmatically and entered the interface between philosophy and methodology then process issues come into play. Praxis is the practical application of theory and represents the third P of the Five Ps framework of mixed methods research. The mixed methods researcher needs to be knowledgeable, informed and familiar with the growing body of literature that forms mixed methods as a third methodological movement. They must also become familiar with discipline based mixed methods research and literature.

However, the quantitative is the main method of this study and qualitative as secondary source of data collection. The questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data, while focus group discussion was used to gather qualitative data. The features of quantitative and data collection techniques in this study are a set of questionnaire and qualitative data collection techniques is a protocol of focused group discussion. According to Cresswell (2009), the strategy of inquiry was based on both qualitative and quantitative methods recognizing that all methods have limitations, researchers felt that biases inherent in any single method could neutralize or cancel the biases to the other methods. He also mentioned that the two methods build and support each other and are "interconnected and interrelated so that the study appears as a cohesive whole rather that as fragmented isolated parts. The researcher was used mixed methods research design because is to tackle a given research question from any relevant angle, making use where appropriate of previous research or more than one

type of investigative perspective. The qualitative and quantitative approaches are briefly outlined below.

Quantitative Method. Quantitative methods of research involve statistical analysis (Brunt, 1997). This allows generalizations to be made about the survey population from the research undertaken on the sample population (Brunt, 1997). Types of quantitative research include personal interviews; on-site, home-based or office-based or telephone interviews, self-completion questionnaires, mail back questionnaires, a household survey, street survey, site or user survey or captive group surveys (Brunt, 1997; Smith, 1993; Veal, 2006). Questionnaires are the most popular form of quantitative research (Brunt, 1997). Questionnaires are a set of designed questions that allow the collection of information from individuals (Veal, 2006). The purpose is to find reliable and valid information for analysis on the given topic for generalizations to be drawn from the population (Finn et al., 2000). Questionnaires are an invaluable tool if they are designed well and data collection and analysis is comprehensive (Brunt, 1997). They are used to gain facts and opinions of people which are deemed neglected by other methods (Brunt, 1997). Through using a standardized set of questions comparability is possible and central to this method. (Axinn, 2006).

Response rates are a significant issue and are the determining factor in the success or failure of a questionnaire (Finn et al., 2000). Response rates determine the representativeness of the sample where a high response rate reduces response bias (Babbie, 1973). A response rate of 50 percent is considered to be good (Brunt, 1997) although other authors consider 50 percent to be adequate, 60 percent to be good and anything over 70 percent to be very good (Babbie, 1973). To attempt to increase the response rate it has been suggested to increase the sample size, design the

questionnaire well, offer an incentive (Finn et al., 2000), ensure the questionnaire is short, give an explanation of the purpose of the questionnaire and ensure reminders are sent to the participants (Smith, 1995). Importance is placed on having a high response rate because the assumption is that the sample is reflective of the population (Finn et al., 2000). If there is a considerably low response rate a segment of the population might have been missed leading to bias in the results (Finn et al., 2000).

When discussing questionnaires the mail back survey is the most dominant, however in the late 1990's there was a suggestion that in the future online surveys will become the norm and move away from being the exception to the rule (Beebe, Mika, Harrison, Anderson, & Fulkerson, 1997). Using the internet is a common activity at the current time (Duffy, Smith, Terhanian, & Bremer, 2005). Furthermore, using the internet to conduct online questionnaires is also increasingly popular (Van Selm & Jankowski, 2006), and it could be argued that now, almost fifteen years after Beebe et al. (1997) comments, they are becoming the norm as previously suggested. Online questionnaires are not a well utilized resource for researchers but have the potential to become one (Sills & Song, 2002). Due to the sample participants being students who have internet access and are technology savvy an online questionnaire was chosen as the method of data collection.

Online questionnaires are self-completion questionnaires (Bryman, 2008). Bryman (2008) distinguishes between email and web surveys where in the former the questionnaire is sent via email and in the latter respondents are directed to a web page. This research utilizes the web survey33. Online questionnaires are fully electronic which allows the selected individuals to open the online questionnaire from an email, complete the questionnaire and submit it (Veal, 2006). The data is processed by the questionnaire tool which analyses the data supplied (Veal, 2006). Having the software

analyses the information for the researcher is one of the benefits of using an online questionnaire (Veal, 2006).

Using web surveys is advantageous over email surveys because embellishments and color can be added to make the questionnaire more appealing (Bryman, 2008). Online questionnaires have the ability to filter questions, this means that respondents only see and answer the questions relevant to them based on their previous answers (Bryman, 2008; Czaja & Blair, 2005; Veal, 2006). Online questionnaires are also a very cheap method of conducting a questionnaire; it alleviates the cost of printing the survey, mailing it, and having a post-paid envelope provided for the respondent to send the survey back in (Bryman, 2008; Czaja & Blair, 2005; Schaefer & Dillman, 1998; Van Selm & Jankowski, 2006; Veal, 2006). Online questionnaires are also a very quick method of sampling a population (Bryman, 2008; Czaja & Blair, 2005; Duffy, et al., 2005), as it has been found in a comparable study of mail and online questionnaires that online responses were much faster (Schaefer & Dillman, 1998).

Sampling of people from vast geographic locations is also suited to using an online questionnaire (Bryman, 2008; J. R. Evans & Mathur, 2005; Van Selm & Jankowski, 2006). This is important for this research as it enables a variety of people throughout New Zealand to be sampled, i.e. those studying at PIHMS in New Plymouth. This would be an obvious conclusion to draw due to the instant ability to send and receive mail online as opposed to waiting for the postal service. Eliminating the bias created by the interviewer/researcher is also a benefit of online questionnaires where the behavior and conversation of the interviewer do not affect the responses as they are not physically present at the time of completion (Duffy et al., 2005). However, like all survey methods there are disadvantages; for instance, only those with access to

the internet have the option to answer it (Czaja & Blair, 2005; Veal, 2006). An online questionnaire can also be susceptible to a low response rate because the invitation email to participate in the questionnaire might be filtered to the respondents 'junk-mail' box or their inbox is full, hence they potentially will not open it (Bryman, 2008; Czaja & Blair, 2005; Karageorgou & Lazari, n.d.; Sills & Song, 2002; Veal, 2006). In one study there was a rate of almost 4% of non-responses because of undeliverable emails (Karageorgou & Lazari, n.d.). Online questionnaires have also not been found to have a higher response rate than mail questionnaires (Schaefer & Dillman, 1998). To overcome this, sending out a pre-notification of an imminent questionnaire and reminder emails are beneficial (Karageorgou & Lazari, n.d.). The more times that people are contacted about the questionnaire the more likely it will be that they will complete it (Schaefer & Dillman, 1998). However, the risk of respondents completing the questionnaire more than once is likely which can skew the results (Bryman, 2008).

Other issues that could arise with using an online questionnaire are technological issues and internet security problems (Karageorgou & Lazari, n.d.). It is argued that researchers spend a lot of time solving technological problems with an online questionnaire (Van Selm & Jankowski, 2006) which could potentially be the time they have saved from undertaking a mail back survey. It has been found that participants using such answers as I don't know, but other conflicting research shows they do the opposite and pick the extreme options on a scale (Duffy et al., 2005). In this research this problem is minimized with only two questions requiring answers using a scale. The most common problem however, is sampling issues (Duffy et al., 2005).

Despite the negatives, the benefits of an online questionnaire appealed to the author as a satisfactory means of collecting information. As well as this the geographic

coverage an online questionnaire can reach, the low cost and the ability to incorporate skip logic all outweigh using a mail out questionnaire.

Quantitative research, by contrast, is an approach by which numeric data is collected from a specified sample (Singh, 2007). According to Bieger and Gerlach (1996), they maintain that quantitative research uses numerical data such as mean and median to describe variables. They further argue that quantitative researchers use numerical data such as correlation coefficients to show a relationship among variables. A quantitative survey approach were used during the study in order to explore the development of hospitality employability skills required at a workplace. The quantitative section included the measurement of data using a questionnaire. The advantage in "using measurement is that one may apply the powerful tools of mathematics to the study of phenomena" (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991). Survey research was conducted by interviewing a small portion of a large population through the application of a set of systematic, scientific, and orderly procedures for the purpose of making accurate generalizations about the large population (Rea & Parker, 2005). Questionnaires or surveys typically collect three types of information: descriptive, behavioral, and attitudinal (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991). The research followed a systematic process including development of appropriate sampling design, appropriate instrumentation that addressed the research question, collection of data, analysis of data, and the final written report.

Qualitative Method. The study was followed by a qualitative approach because the researcher was attempted to identify and describe the hospitality employability skills required by students from vocational schools in Malaysia. According to Gay, Mills and Airasian (2006) argue that qualitative research is the collection, analysis and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and visual (non-

numerical) data in order to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest. They further point out that qualitative research is an intensive method of collecting data through observation and interviewing, and the data collected is analyzed inductively by way of categorizing and organizing data into patterns that produce a descriptive and narrative synthesis. According to Creswell (2005), the survey method helps to identify beliefs and attitude of the individual. Focus group interviews with the vocational students explored the employability skills needed by employers in hospitality industry. The qualitative inquiry process mirrored closely the circle of activities or phases as proposed by Creswell (2007). He said firstly identifying the participants to interview, gaining access, purposefully sampling, collecting data, recording of information, resolving issues that may arise, and storing data. Trustworthiness of the qualitative portion of the research, per Lincoln and Guba (1985), is the ability of the researcher to persuade the consumer of the research that the findings are worthy and includes the four criteria of credibility, transferability (consistency), dependability, and confirm ability.

The four criteria of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) include: First, Credibility. Were the researchers analysis and interpretations of the phenomenon explored believable. Second, Transferability (consistency, fittingness) – Was the information concerning the participants descriptive and inclusive, allowing for others to evaluate similarities to other participants. Can the research findings have application to other similar participants? Third, Dependability – Does the researcher demonstrate reliability in the process followed including a logical process that was documented well. Fourth, Confirmability – Were the findings linked and founded in the data without the researcher inserting bias? Lincoln and Guba (1985) go on to state that trustworthiness is the researchers‟ ability to persuade the consumer of the research that

the findings are worthy. There are multiple methods to determine the trustworthiness of the research findings.

One such method is member checks, allowing participants to review the findings to determine if they view the outcomes as accurate (Creswell, 2009; Seidman, 1998). Member checks were implemented for review of findings and researcher interpretations of interviews with innovative instructors. Additionally, trustworthiness was enhanced by the use of rich, thick descriptions (Creswell, 2010**)** and the use of direct quotes; both efforts to persuade the reader that the findings are worthy. The role of the researcher in qualitative inquiry is critical as "data do not speak for themselves: they are interpreted through complex cognitive processes" by the researcher as they construct knowledge (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

Even though the research uses a mixed method approach but in term of weight, the study focused more on quantitative approach than qualitative. The reason for the focus on quantitative method to answer the research questions.

Population & Sampling

One of the most important considerations in sampling is what the size of that sample should be. It is generally known and accepted that studying the entire population would be the ideal situation; however, not only is this costly, but collecting the data and analysis thereof may take so long that it may become outdated, and thus irrelevant. Bless et al., (2006) argue that the main factor to consider when deciding on sample size is whether the sample will be representative of the population. Maree and Pietersen (2007) (as cited in Maree, 2007) indicate that sample size generally depends on the planned types of statistical analyses, the degree of accuracy required, and the overall characteristics of the population.

Quantitative Sampling. In the current study, stratified random sampling was used, with the sample considered to have been representative of the greater population, as described by Bless et al. (2006). The target population for this study were students in the hospitality program at the vocational schools in Malaysia who are classified as final year students. According to Technical and Vocational Education Department (BPTV) there are 79 numbers of vocational schools in Malaysia. But only 27 numbers of vocational schools which offer the hospitality programs which are culinary, tourism and bakery. However in this study the researcher focused on two courses which are Culinary and Bakery. This is because these two courses are quite same programs compared to tourism course. Therefore the total number vocational colleges that only offers these two courses are 22 vocational colleges. The sample selection for this study was a stratified random sample of the final year students present in the two courses which are culinary and bakery. The study only focuses on two courses because more related to the employability skills in hospitality area. The tourism course are not selected because the tourism course are more on event management compare to bakery and culinary course focused on kitchen activities. The questionnaire was directly administered. Due to time constraint, a stratified random sampling was used because the cases are selected from well-defined strata within the overall population to further enhance the representativeness of the overall sample. Before data gathering done, it is important for the researcher first to determine and select the number of vocational schools in Malaysia. The respondents for the study are among vocational students who are in final year. Researcher went to each vocational school in Malaysia which are offered hospitality program.

Table 3.1
Regions in Malaysia and Vocational Schools

No	West Malaysia	No of Vocational schools
1	South	
	Johor	8
	Melaka	3
	Negeri Sembilan	6
2	Central	
	Selangor	9
3	East	
	Terengganu	4
	Kelantan	6
	Pahang	7
4	North	
	Perak	9
	Pulau Pinang	5
	Kedah	5
	Perlis	2
	East Malaysia	
5	Sarawak	7
	Sabah	8
Total of Vocational Colleges		79

Source: Technical and Vocational Education Department (BPTV), 201

Table 3.2

Vocational Schools by Hospitality Programs

No	West Malaysia	No of Vocational schools
1	South	
	Johor	3
	Melaka	1
	Negeri Sembilan	1
2	Central	
	Selangor	4
3	East	
	Terengganu	2
	Kelantan	1
4	North	
	Perak	2
	Kedah	2
	Perlis	1
	East Malaysia	
5	Sarawak	5
Total of Vocational Colleges		22

Source: Technical and Vocational Education Department (BPTV), 2014

In each vocational colleges, two courses were selected. The selected courses consist of bakery and culinary students. The selected students from each courses are 30 (BPTV, 2014). It is because to prevent any bias in collecting data from a certain group of students. The researcher was distributed the questionnaire to different courses of the vocational students. This sampling procedure ensures the samples are a good

representative of the population. The total numbers of vocational colleges are twenty two vocational colleges from five regions: South, Central, East, North, and East Malaysia. The chosen vocational colleges represent bakery and culinary courses. Each course has 30 students in a classroom (BPTV, 2014). Therefore, the calculation of sample size is as below:

(Number of vocational colleges X number of courses X number of students)

(22 X 2 X 30 = 1320 students)

However, this study able to collect data from 841 students. The sample size for the study was determined using the Krejie and Morgan's (1970) size sampling (refer Appendix A). While Hair et al., (2006) stated that 10 percent of random sampling should give a good power statistical analysis. In short, referring to Krejie and Morgan's (1970) and Hair et al., (2006), sampling size of this study were representative and good enough for running statistical analysis.

Qualitative Sampling. The study also conducts focus group discussions as a qualitative approach method to collect in depth data. Creswell (2009) suggests five to ten persons to be involved in focused group discussion. The total number of sample for the interview is ten students from one of the vocational colleges. The samples are well represented in terms of gender and courses. The students chosen for interview are from students who answer the survey. The students are chosen randomly with their willingness to participate the interview.

Table 3.3
Interview Samples

Number of students	Gender	Courses
3	Male	Bakery
2	Female	Bakery
2	Male	Culinary
3	Female	Culinary

Instrumentation

The instruments in this study are focus group interviews and survey questionnaires. The instruments were discussed below.

Quantitative Instrument. The research instrument used in this study is based on literature review. The questionnaire contained one page on both sides. An introductory and directional paragraph was placed at the beginning of the questionnaire. To collect the data necessary to answer the researcher's research questions, a quantitative approach was used. For the quantitative approach, a self-administered questionnaire for the final year students thoroughly designed. The instruments for the study consisted of 2 sections; demographics and employability skills. Part A of the student questionnaire requested demographic information including gender, race, household income, parental education, and current CGPA. While Part B is to measure the employability skills of the students and researcher were used the instrument developed by the Part B contains 150 items adapted from generic skills questionnaire developed by the SCANS (1991), Mohd Sattar (2009), Kamaruddin (2010), Soft Skills (KPTM 2006) and Malaysian Quality Framework (MQA), 2005) including Communication Skills, Teamwork Skills, Problem-solving Skills, Initiative and enterprise Skills, Planning and organizing Skills, Self-management Skills, Resource Management Skills, Technology Skills, Leadership Skills, and Basic Skills. However, in this study the researcher has added other skills which are Entrepreneurship Skills, Learning How to Learn, Working with Others,

Technical and Vocational Skills, Ethical and Professional Moral Skills. Therefore this study is more valuable and will help other researchers locally and internationally as guidance for their study.

According to Sekaran (2003), in order to gain the useful data and response, the survey instrument should be straightforward and the respondents can answer the questions in the most consistent manner. In other word, a difficult question structured might cause misunderstanding and weak response. A five-point Likert-type scale with the following response choices were used in this part of the instrument.

Table 3.4

Likert Scale of the Questionnaire

Level of competency	1	2	3	4	5
	No level of competence – no experience in the skill area	Low level of competence – little experience in the skill area	Average level of competence – some experience in the skill area	Moderately high level of competence - good experience in the skill area	High level of competence - extensive experience in the skill area
Level of importance	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
	Not very important	Not important	Neutral	Important	Very important

In this respect, close-ended questions using a Likert scale was selected for this study due to its reliability and the ability to provide a greater volume of data than any other scales particularly when measuring people's attitudes and opinions towards different aspects (Babbie, 2007). The researcher distributed the questionnaire by her own and explains to the vocational college and respondents about the confidentially of information and respondent identity. It is to ensure that the identity of the respondents is kept anonymous. The researcher also explains the purpose of the survey and how to answer the questions in Malay for the students who may not understand and not have a good command in English. Every question that is close-ended needs to be explained

in detail. Students are given adequate time to understand and answer the questionnaire. Students also allowed to ask questions to clarify items that they could not understand. All detailed about to complete the questionnaire have been written in the survey questions.

Descriptive statistics is devoted to the summarization and description of a collection of data. Descriptive statistics includes the construction of graphs, charts, and tables, and the calculation of various descriptive measures such as averages, measures of variation, and percentiles.

Once the data files were clean and free from errors, descriptive was used to screen the gathered data. Descriptive statistics included frequencies, percentage, mean scores, and standard deviations of the study variables. Descriptive statistic also provides some information concerning to the distribution of scores on continuous variables (skewness and kurtosis). According to Pallant (2005) this information may be needed if these variables are to be used in parametric statistical techniques (for example t-test, analysis of variance).

The t-test assesses whether the means of two groups are statistically different from each other. This analysis is appropriate whenever you want to compare the means of two groups, and especially appropriate for the analysis for the posttest-only two-group randomized experimental design. To examine the research question, a one sample *t-test* conducted to compare variable to hypothesized mean. The one sample *t*-test is an appropriate analysis when the researcher compares the mean of a sample with a hypothesized mean to assess if differences occur. The assumptions of the one sample *t-test* include: the data must be normally distributed within the population, the data should be independent, and the scores of one participant are not dependent upon scores of another participant.

According to Borden et al., (2008), the independent samples t-test is used to compare two groups whose means are not dependent on one another. In other words, when the participants in each group are independent from each other and actually comprise two separate groups of individuals, who do not have any linkages to particular members of the other group (in contrast to dependent samples). A common example of independent groups might be comparisons between males and females who do not have relationships between particular males and females (versus if the males and females were linked through romantic relationships). In this example the factor that differentiates the two groups, gender, does not indicate that the scores from one group (males) will be dependent on scores from the other group (females) and they are thus considered independent samples. Results of an independent samples t-test indicate whether the difference between two means (e.g., means of programs receiving intervention and means of programs not receiving intervention) are larger than expected by chance. Using the example above, if the instructors who received the intervention had higher mean quality scores compared to a group that did not receive the intervention, there would be evidence that the intervention increased the quality of instruction.

Regression analysis is a technique used in statistics for investigating and modeling the relationship between variables (Douglas Montgomery, Peck, & Vinning, 2012). Regression analysis refers to a set of techniques for predicting an outcome variable using one or more explanatory variables. It is essentially about creating a model for estimating one variable based on the values of others. Simple linear regression is regression analysis in its most basic form - it is used to predict a continuous (scale) outcome variable from *one* continuous explanatory variable. Simple Linear regression can be conceived as the process of drawing a line to represent an

association between two variables on a scatterplot and using that line as a linear model for predicting the value of one variable (outcome) from the value of the other (explanatory variable).

Multiple linear regression is the most common form of the regression analysis. As a predictive analysis, multiple linear regression is used to describe data and to explain the relationship between one dependent variable and two or more independent variables.

At the center of the multiple linear regression analysis lies the task of fitting a single line through a scatter plot. More specifically, the multiple linear regression fits a line through a multi-dimensional cloud of data points. The simplest form has one dependent and two independent variables.

Qualitative Instrument. Most of the research on employability skills applies either quantitative or qualitative methodology. The current research uses focus group discussion to collect the qualitative data. Interview questions are adapted from a protocol interview in a research on key skills set by Zalizan Mohd Jelas et al (2006) and core competencies set by QCA (2000). The main themes to be raised in a focused group discussion are; purpose/skills, knowledge/experience, learning outcomes, assessment, expectations/purposes. Skills expected to gain more and employment. The interviews were audio taped, transcribed and interpreted. In supporting the findings of the study, verbatim from interview transcripts would be quoted to strengthen the basis of arguments. The interview questions are developed in English and Malay. A participate approach was used in the focused group discussion by giving opportunities to challenge, amend or add to their response. Particular care was taken to main the originality of interview data resources. In addition, interpretations of the data include references to attachments that display relevants personal quotes from the focused

group discussion. Reader, therefore, have the opportunity to form their own opinion about the validity of analysis.

Pilot study

A pilot study is the process of administering the questionnaire for a trial run where feedback can be sought to make improvements (Veal, 2006). Veal (2006, p. 276) identified the purpose of a pilot study as being to "test questionnaire wording, sequencing, layout, familiarity with respondents, test fieldwork arrangements, train and test fieldworkers, estimate response rate, estimate interview etc., time, test analysis procedures". This is an important step in designing and administering a questionnaire which can sometimes be missed (Finn et al., 2000). Upon completion of the development of this questionnaire a pilot study was carried out.

The pilot study was conducted by sending the questionnaire to six people that were known to the author in early July of which five were returned. The pilot study was conducted to ensure that the questionnaire held validity and was reliable (Finn et al., 2000). This was a beneficial step because spelling errors were found and some questions needed to be re-worded to be more easily understood. It was also found that a crucial filtering question had been missed. Because of the nature of the university where papers may be taken for interest some students might not have been undergraduates, hence such a question was added. Also at the University of Otago students taking 400 level papers are both undergraduate students studying towards honors, or postgraduates undertaking a Post Graduate Diploma and these students needed to be filtered out of the study. Those undertaking the pilot study were also asked to time how long it took them to complete it which allowed an accurate time frame of completion to be given to respondents. Time ranged from four minutes to

fifteen minutes. The responses of the pilot study were discarded prior to the questionnaire being sent to the sample population.

The purpose of the pilot-test is to evaluate the instrument for reliability and validity. For purposes of clarification of the questionnaires, the pilot-test was conducted from July 27 to August 2015 by using E-mails. The researcher emailed the questionnaires to the teacher of the vocational college and she posted the completed questionnaires to the researcher. The questionnaires with English versions was e-mailed to the vocational school. There are 30 students who participated in this study. These students were selected based on their understanding of answering the questions, they also in the same courses who are study at the Vocational Colleges. Besides, regarding the knowledge level, the questionnaire also sent to the hospitality professor in technical university, lecturer in private colleges and also industrial management in order to gain more validity.

To ensure its reliability for use with the sample, the pilot study were tested among 30 students from one of the vocational college. The idea of the pilot study is to make sure that:

1. Questions are easy to understand (clarity), and
2. Any anomalies in the questionnaire are identified.
3. Research questions are suitable
4. The questionnaire can be completed within reasonable time.

To secure participation in the pilot study, the researcher was contacted each colleges by telephone. Upon receiving their agreement to participate, a letter of explanation, the survey instrument and comment page was distributed. Neuman (2003), asserted that it had been widely recognized that reliability and validity of the

instrument used could be improved by using a pre-test or pilot study. Hence, it is important to check on the uniformity, consistency, reliability of the questionnaire used.

Reliability of the Instrument

Reliability "refers to the degree to which test scores are free from errors of measurement" (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991) and should not be confused with validity as the two measures do not-test the same topic. Reliability, or consistency, and repeatability of an instrument were reported as a reliability coefficient, or Cronbach's alpha in this case, a numeric value between 0 and 1, with higher values indicating stronger instrument consistency (Hittleman & Simon, 2006).

The questionnaire used in this research is reliable in the sense that the results will be replicable when the research would be conducted again with the similar sample, keeping in mind that all the factors have to be kept the same. In this research, the reliability was tested by using SPSS version 20. Reliability analysis, referring to Cronbach alpha (α), had been carried out to determine the reliability coefficients of the instruments. As Pallant (2007), ideally suggested that Cronbach alpha coefficient of construct is 0.7. However, if a domain consists of fewer than 10 items, Cronbach alpha 0.6 is acceptable. In this study, α value 0.7 and above is acceptable for each domain. In additions, Haier el al. (2006); Pallant (2001) advised a good corrected item at 0.30 and above is accepted as a good item to measure what they had expected to measure. Table 3.5 show the reliability analysis conducted to pilot study of the vocational colleges.

Table 3.5
Cronbach alpha of instrument at Vocational Colleges

Employability Skills	Item	Cronbach alpha (α)
Communication Skills	10	0.87
Teamwork Skills	10	0.85
Problem-solving Skills	10	0.79
Initiative and enterprise Skills	10	0.78
Planning and organizing Skills	10	0.80
Self-management Skills	10	0.83
Resource Management Skills	10	0.75
Technology Skills	10	0.92
Leadership Skills	10	0.79
Basic Skills	10	0.78
Entrepreneurship Skills	10	0.80
Learning How to Learn	10	0.83
Working with Others	10	0.72
Ethical and Professional Moral Skills	10	0.79
Technical and Vocational Skills	10	0.78

Table 3.5 shows the reliability (Cronbach Alpha) of fifteen domains in the employability skills survey. The highest score is Technology Skills (0.92), followed by the Communication Skills (0.87), Teamwork Skills (0.85), Self-management Skills (0.83), Learning How to Learn (0.83), Planning and Organizing (0.80), Entrepreneurship Skills (0.80), Problem-solving Skills (0.79), Leadership skills (0.79), Ethical and Professional Moral Skills (0.79), Basic Skills (0.78), Initiative and enterprise (0.78), Technical and Vocational Skills (0.78), Resource Management Skills (0.75) and the lowest score is Working with Others (0.72). All the variables used in this study showed Cronbach Alpha values more than 0.7 indicating that the chosen item are consistent and reliable.

Validity of the Instrument

According to Messick (1994), validity of the quantitative instrument is defined often as the "adequacy and appropriateness of interpretations and actions based on test scores. However, a major issue of reviewing the validity of an instrument is ascertaining what constitutes appropriate, and meaningful (Pedhazur & Schmelkin,

1991). Validity for this research is best described as one validates, not a test, but an interpretation of data arising from a specified procedure (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991). Face validity, or does the instrument look as if it would measure what it intends to measure (Hittleman & Simon, 2006) was established and required modifications made based on the recommendation of committee members and previous research that used the same instrument with a similar target group.

Validity of the quantitative instrument is defined often as the adequacy and appropriateness of interpretations and actions based on test scores (Messick, 1994). Validity for this research is best described as one validates, not a test, but an interpretation of data arising from a specified procedure (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1996). Face validity or does the instrument look as if it would measure what it intends to measure (Hittleman & Simon, 2006) was established and required modifications made based on the recommendation of committee members and previous research that used the same instrument with a similar target group. There are four major types of validity which are:

1. Internal validity: When the relationship between variables is causal. This type refers to the relationship between dependent and independent variables. It is associated with the design of the experiment and is only relevant in studies that try to establish a causal relationship. For example, it can be used for the random assignment of treatments.
2. External validity: When there is a causal relationship between the cause and effect that can be transferred to people, treatments, variables, and different measurement variables which differ from the other.
3. Statistical conclusion validity: The conclusion reached or inference drawn about the extent of the relationship between the two variables. For instance, it can be

found when we aim at finding the strength of relationship between any two variables that have been under observation and analysis. If we do reach the correct conclusion, then it is said to be statistical conclusion validity. There are two types of statistical conclusion validity. They are as follows:

a. Type one error: Type one error is when we conclude that there is a relationship between two variables and we reject a true null hypothesis when in reality, there is no relationship between the two variables. This is in fact very dangerous.

b. Type two errors: If we fail to reject a false null hypothesis that is true it is called type two error.

In statistical conclusion validity, the method of power analysis is used to detect the relationship. Several problems crop up while making a statistical conclusion. For instance, if a small sample size is used, then there is the possibility that the result will not be correct. To avoid this, the sample size should be of considerable size. Statistical validity is also threatened by the violation of statistical assumptions. The results may not be accurate, however, if values in analysis are biased and the wrong statistical test is approved.

4. Construct validity: Extent that a measurement actually represents the construct it is measuring. For instance, in structural equation modelling, when we draw the construct, then we presume that the factor loading for the construct is greater than .7. To draw construct validity, Cronbach's alpha is used. For exploratory purposes .60 is accepted, for confirmatory purposes .70 is accepted, and .80 is considered good. If the construct satisfies the above presumption and expectation, then the construct would be helpful in predicting the relationship for dependent

variables. Convergent/divergent validation and factor analysis are also used to test construct validity. Relationship between reliability and validity:

- There is no way that a test that is unreliable is valid. Again, any test that is valid must be reliable. By this statement we are able to derive that validity plays a significant role in analysis as it ensures the conclusion of accurate results. Overall threats:

1. Insufficient data collected to make valid conclusion
2. Measurement done with too few measurement variables
3. Too much variation in data or outliers in data
4. Wrong selection of samples
5. Inaccurate measurement method taken for analysis

After some adjustment of the questions, in essence, validity in this study involves two concepts simultaneously, content validity and convergent validity.

a. Content validity, sometimes called logical or rational validity, is the estimate of how much a measure represents every single element of a construct. Determining the content validity of an instrument is a necessary task when conducting any form of social science research using a new or adapted survey instrument (Jackson, 2006). Content validity is estimated from the review of the literature on the topic or through consultation with experts in the field who have become experts by having done unpublished research in the area (Hair et al., 2006). In this research, researcher had critically reviewed the literature from resources across nations and continent. Moreover, the construct, questions in the instruments had been developed and assessed by experts in higher education, psychology, IT, and education (Jelas et al., 2006). In addition, the respective respondents also had been asked to contribute an

additional information that was not mentioned in the questionnaire which could be useful for this research (Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Forster, 2000; Waxin & Panaccio, 2005). For example, an educational test with strong content validity will represent the subjects actually taught to students, rather than asking unrelated questions. Content validity is often seen as a prerequisite to criterion validity, because it is a good indicator of whether the desired trait is measured. If elements of the test are irrelevant to the main construct, then they are measuring something else completely, creating potential bias. In addition, criterion validity derives quantitative correlations from test scores. Content validity is qualitative in nature, and asks whether a specific element enhances or detracts from a test or research program.

b. The convergent validity of an instrument is the extent to which indicators or a specific construct converge or share a high proportion a high variants in common (Hair, et al. 2006). Convergent validity tests that constructs that are expected to be related are, in fact, related. In this study, convergent validity was investigated by confirmatory factor analysis by using SPSS 20. In other words, since the constructs of the measurement had been identified by experts or previous researchers under IRPA project, the aims of factor analysis then is to confirm whether items tapping into the same construct and measuring the construct (Coak & Hinton et al., 2004).

The criterion for the convergent validity was considered as acceptable if the items in each construct yielded factor loading at least 0.40 or higher (Hair et al., 2006 & Pallant, 2007). The loading factor was investigated thought make decision based until the component matrix output if each variable give acceptable factor loading toward the construct or component (Hair et al., 2006 & Pallant, 2007).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is a multivariate statistical procedure that is used to test how well the measured variables represent the number of constructs. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) are similar techniques, but in exploratory factor analysis (EFA), data is simply explored and provides information about the numbers of factors required to represent the data. In exploratory factor analysis, all measured variables are related to every latent variable. But in confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), researchers can specify the number of factors required in the data and which measured variable is related to which latent variable. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is a tool that is used to confirm or reject the measurement theory.

The assumptions of a CFA include multivariate normality, a sufficient sample size (n >200), the correct a priori model specification, and data must come from a random sample.

In conducting the factor analysis, it is important to assess the suitability of the data for the factor analysis. Using the Kaiser –Meyer Olkin (KMO) and Barlett's test, it help to assess the factorability of the data (Kaiser, 1970, 1974; Barlett, 1954). Barlett's test of sphericity should be significant ($p<.05$) for the factor analysis to be considered appropropriate. The KMO index ranges from 0 to 1, with .6 suggested as the minimum value for a good factor analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

Table below shows the KMO test result for the collected data. The assessment to consider the data for further analysis factor analysis shows the significant value for Barlett's test, but the low value of KMO test. This test was tested only for 13 subscale instead of 15. Based on the criterion stated, this data is not suitable for further analysis in factor analysis.

To be confirmed, after run all the 15 subscale in competence component, the KMO and Barlett's test result not show up and the data shows "This matrix is not positive definite", its mean that the data that left over is in negative values and the rotation for factor analysis cannot be done.

Table 3.6
KMO and Barlett's Test Result

Kaiser-Meyer- Olkin	Measure of Sampling Adequacy	.147
Barlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	82437.562
	df	8385
	Sig.	.000

Exploratory Factor Analysis. Exploratory factor analysis is a statistical technique that is used to reduce data to a smaller set of summary variables and to explore the underlining theoretical structure of the phenomena. It is used to identify the structure of the relationship between the variable and the respondent. Exploratory factor analysis can be performed by using the following two methods:

- R-type factor analysis: When factors are calculated from the correlation matrix, then it is called R-type factor analysis.
- Q-type factor analysis: When factors are calculated from the individual respondent, then it said to be Q-type factor analysis. There are two methods for driving factor, these two methods are as follows:

1. Principle component factor analysis method: This method is used when we need to drive the minimum number of factors and explain the maximum portion of variance in the original variable.
2. Common factor analysis: This method is used when the researchers do not know the nature of the factor to be extracted and the common error variance. Selection of factors to be extracted. Theory is the first criteria to determine the number of factors to be extracted. From theory, we know that the number of

factors extracted does make sense. Most researchers use the Eigenvalue criteria for the number of factors to be extracted. Value of the percentage and variance explained method is also used for exploratory factor analysis. We can use the scree test criteria for the selection of factors. In this method, Eigenvalue is plotted on a graph and factors are selected.

In this method (Orthogonal rotation), axis are maintained at 90 degrees, thus the factors are uncorrelated to each other. In orthogonal rotation, the following three methods are available based on the rotation:

- Quartimax: Rows are simplified so that the variable should be loaded on a single factor.
- Varimax: Used to simplify the column of the factor matrix so that the factor extracts are clearly associated and there should be some separation among the variables.
- Equimax: The combination of the above two methods. This method simplifies row and column at a single time

Factor loading can be classified based on their magnitude:

Greater than + .30 — minimum consideration level

+ .40 — more important

+ .50 — practically significant

In term of power and significance level, the researcher can determine the statistical power and significance level. For instance, in order to achieve a factor loading of .55 with a power of .80, a sample of 100 is needed. Factor analysis can be performed in SPSS by clicking on analysis from menu, and then selecting factor from the data reduction option.

- Variables used should be metric. Dummy variables can also be considered, but only in special cases.
- Sample size: Sample size should be more than 200. In some cases, sample size may be considered for 5 observations per variable.
- Homogeneous sample: A sample should be homogenous. Violation of this assumption increases the sample size as the number of variables increases. Reliability analysis is conducted to check the homogeneity between variables.
- In exploratory factor analysis, multivariate normality is not required.
- Correlation: At least 0.30 correlations are required between the research variables.
- There should be no outliers in the data.

Data collection procedures

The study was employ both qualitative and quantitative approaches in collecting data for the study. The questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data and was administered concurrently with the qualitative data-collection process that consisted of focused group conducted by the researcher. Prior to administering the questionnaires, the researcher properly introducing herself at the vocational colleges that she visited, being polite to the students, explaining the purpose of the research as well as explaining and assisting the students to complete the questionnaire if the need arose. Therefore, the students returned and completed the questionnaires. Letters permissions and inviting students to participate in the study as well as explaining the purpose of the study together with a letter from the University of Malaya confirming the authenticity of the research will be accompanied the questionnaire. The researcher has mailed a formal letter requesting for permission to conduct this survey to Ministry of Education (refer Appendix B for permission letters).

Quantitative data collection. The researcher personally visited the vocational colleges and follow up the official approval about her intentions with the Principal of the vocational colleges. After confirmation with the teacher of the colleges, the researcher started to distribute the questionnaire to the students according to their courses (bakery and culinary). In general, the respondents spend 30 minutes to 35 minutes to respond the questionnaire completely. In short quantitative data collection was conducted by distributing questionnaire on the spot and then waited 35 minutes for collection. The response rates of the questionnaires are summarized in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7
Frequency and percentage of Students' Response Rate

Program	Vocational Colleges	
	Questionnaires Distributed	Questionnaires Return
Bakery	660	487
Culinary	660	354
Total	1320 (100.0%)	841 (63.7%)

Qualitative data collection. Qualitative research is characterized by its inability to be generalized to the population. Marshall (1996) argues that qualitative research does not set out to form generalizations instead it is used to understand complex human issues. To ensure a successful focus group occurs the discussions are led by a moderator or group leader who fosters discussion on the given topic without interacting verbally too much (Brunt, 1997; Bryman, 2008). A relaxed, comfortable atmosphere will encourage participants to take part in the discussions (Brunt, 1997; Payne, 2004). Focus groups are advantageous when the interaction among interviewees will likely yield the best information, where interviewees are similar and cooperative with each other, when time to collect information is limited, and when individuals interviewed one-on-one may be hesitant to provide information. (Creswell, 2007)

Focus groups have been described as group interviews without the reliance on the interviewer to be the question asker but to be the moderator of discussion amongst the group members about a question the moderator has asked (Brunt, 1997; Bryman, 2008; Morgan, 1997). Focus groups are able to give information about people and their experiences, motivations, behaviors, needs and aspirations (Brunt, 1997). Unlike quantitative analysis, the information that is gathered is considered rich instead of limited (Brunt, 1997). Focus groups research the reasons why and how instead of what, which is what tends to occur in quantitative research (Bryman, 2008; Marshall, 1996). Furthermore, the participants in the focus group can probe and challenge each other's ideas which can broaden the view of participants and lead to more accurate responses (Bryman, 2008). The interaction between the participants is the focal difference between one-on-one interviews and focus groups (Axinn, 2006). Focus groups allow for the participants to generate ideas about the topic which the researcher may not have previously considered (Bryman, 2008).

There are three types of focus groups that can be held, these are full groups, mini groups and telephone groups (Greenbaum, 1998). The literature is inconsistent in the number of people in each focus group, however numbers range from between six to twelve people, although in using the above groups mini groups there would be four to six people (Brunt, 1997; Finn, et al., 2000; Greenbaum, 1998; Hair, Lukas, Miller, Bush, & Ortinau, 2008; Morgan, 1997; Payne, 2004; Smith, 1995; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). As a rule of thumb three to five focus groups per project are conducted (Morgan, 1997). These numbers are general and each project will have different needs which will constitute the number of people and the number of focus groups. Marshall (1996) suggests that the sample size of qualitative research that is appropriate is one that adequately answers the research question. The number of

groups or people is unknown until the research is begun, the point in which to stop researching is when saturation of information occurs (Marshall, 1996). This is where new information does not emerge as a result of conducting more research (Marshall, 1996).

Focus groups tend to be very unstructured allowing a small group of people to explore a topic (Brunt, 1997; Finn, et al., 2000) although, contrary to this, Morgan (1997) suggests that focus groups are highly structured with considerable moderator involvement. Thus, there is inconsistency within the literature and subsequently the approach taken was less-structured where questions were a guide. Groups are made up of a selection of people with a common interest, such examples could be demographics, attitudes and in this case, a specific course of study (Brunt, 1997; Greenbaum, 1998). Focus groups are suggested to work best "for topics people could talk about to each other in their everyday lives-but do not (Macnaghten & Myers, 2004). However, within this thesis it is possible that the students do talk about this topic but not to the extent and with the same intention that the researcher has. Ensuring that the sample is able to talk about this topic aids in the success of having a group of people discuss, at length, the given topic.

In this study, the focus group interviews are conducted with ten students of the vocational college. According to Punch (2009), an interview is the most prominent data-collection tool in qualitative research. It is a very good way of assessing people's perceptions, meanings, and definitions of situations and construction of reality. The interviews were structured because the researcher used a pre-designed questionnaire that controlled during the interviews to question respondents. In order to ensure that the interview discussions are properly recorded and nothing is omitted from the discussion, the researcher used an audio and visual recorder to record the interviews.

Before commencing with the interviews, permission were obtained from the interviewees to use the recorders. It explained to the interviewees that the purpose of using the audio recorder is to ensure that the interview discussion is recorded in full.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in two phases. First phase was quantitative data analysis that was prime data gotten from the questionnaire. Second phase was qualitative analysis, that transcription analysis of vocational students. The two methods are described in more detail in the following sections. According to De Vos (2002) data analysis as the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of data collected. Qualitative methods put emphasis on the meaning of words, while quantitative methods attempt to describe the findings through statistical procedures. According to Struwig and Stead (2003), data-analysis methods enable researchers to organize and bring meaning to the large amount of data collected during research. Struwig and Stead (2003) further argue that all field notes, interview transcripts and documents should be complete and there should be no missing data. Interviews should be transcribed verbatim and not rephrased to be grammatically correct.

Quantitative data analysis. The quantitative data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 for Windows. The main types of data analysis for both measurement level of competence and level of important in employability skills was obtained from the Likert-scale 5. Score rating of employability skills were stated in Table 3.8.

Table 3.8
Likert Scale of the Questionnaire

Level of competency	1	2	3	4	5
	No level of competence – no	Low level of competence	Average level of competence	Moderately high level of	High level of competence

	experience in the skill area	– little experience in the skill area	– some experience in the skill area	competence - good experience in the skill area	- extensive experience in the skill area
Level of importance	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
	Not very important	Not important	Neutral	Important	Very important

In data analysis, both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis were applied in this research. Descriptive statistics was used to report the profile of the respondents and responses to research question listed in Chapter 1 and also had been discussed at 3.1. Frequency measures including percentage, means and standard deviation was used at this phase. The mean score of the respondents' level of employability skills is calculated and this mean score indicate the respondents' overall self-report on their own level of employability skills. In order to interpret the mean score, QCA (2001) offer the most relevant interpretation of data (Table 3.9).

Table 3.9
Interpretation of Mean Score

Mean Score	Interpretation
1.00 – 2.33	Low
2.34 – 3.66	Medium
3.67 – 5.00	High

Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA, 2000). *Key Skills Units (Level 1 -5)*

The students' mean score of each items and construct collapse into three new groups, as seen in Table 3.9. Mean score within 1.00 – 2.33 falls under the low employability skills level. Meanwhile, if the mean score falls within 2.34 – 3.66, the level of employability skills reaches the medium level. If the mean score within 3.67 – 5.00, it was interpreted as the high level of employability skills.

Inferential statistics was used to investigate the differences among different characteristics of the sample. Inferential statistics analysis used in this study include Man Whitney U, Multiple Linear regression and T-test. Each statistical application

was appropriately applied within the context of proposed research investigation. Detailed tabular statistical tools used for quantitative analysis are reported in Table 3.10 according to research question (RQ) as follows:-

Table 3.10
Statistical Tools for Quantitative Data Analysis

Research Objectives	Test
1. To identify the perceived level of competency on a let of identified employment skills among vocational students majoring in hospitality	Descriptive Statistic (Mean, Standard Deviation)
2. To examine the differences in competency perceived level by gender for vocational students majoring in hospitality	Independent T-Test
3. To identify the differences in competency perceived level between rural and urban vocational students majoring in hospitality	Independent T-Test
4. To examine the determinants of perceived level in employability skills among bakery vocational students majoring in hospitality	Multiple Linear Regression
5. To examine the determinants of perceived level in employability skills among culinary vocational students majoring in hospitality	Multiple Linear Regression
6. To identify the differences in competency perceived level between importance and competence of employability skills among bakery vocational students majoring in hospitality	Independent T-test
7. To identify the differences in competency perceived level between importance and competence of employability skills among culinary vocational students majoring in hospitality	Independent T-Test
8. To examine the skills that are perceived by students for entering the hospitality profession	Interview

Descriptive Statistics. In previous study done by Pallant (2005), he stated that descriptive statistics is devoted to the summarization and description of a collection of data. Descriptive statistics includes the construction of graphs, charts, and tables, and the calculation of various descriptive measures such as averages,

measures of variation, and percentiles. Once the data files were clean and free from errors, descriptive was used to screen the gathered data. Descriptive statistics included frequencies, percentage, mean scores, and standard deviations of the study variables. Descriptive statistic also provides some information concerning to the distribution of scores on continuous variables (skewness and kurtosis). According to Pallant (2005) this information may be needed if these variables are to be used in parametric statistical techniques (e.g. t-test, analysis of variance)

Independent Sample T-Test. According to Borden et al. (2008), the independent samples t-test is used to compare two groups whose means are not dependent on one another. In other words, when the participants in each group are independent from each other and actually comprise two separate groups of individuals, who do not have any linkages to particular members of the other group (in contrast to dependent samples). A common example of independent groups might be comparisons between males and females who do not have relationships between particular males and females (versus if the males and females were linked through romantic relationships). In this example the factor that differentiates the two groups, gender, does not indicate that the scores from one group (males) will be dependent on scores from the other group (females) and they are thus considered independent samples. Results of an independent samples t-test indicate whether the difference between two means (e.g., means of programs receiving intervention and means of programs not receiving intervention) are larger than expected by chance. Using the example above, if the instructors who received the intervention had higher mean quality scores compared to a group that did not receive the intervention, there would be evidence that the intervention increased the quality of instruction.

The assumptions of the two-sample t-test are:

1. The data are continuous (not discrete).
2. The data follow the normal probability distribution.
3. The variances of the two populations are equal. (If not, the Aspin-Welch Unequal-Variance test is used.)
4. The two samples are independent. There is no relationship between the individuals in one sample as compared to the other (as there is in the paired t-test).
5. Both samples are simple random samples from their respective populations. Each individual in the population has an equal probability of being selected in the sample.

Borden et al. (2008) also stated about the Assumptions Underlying the Independent-Samples T – Test. The data (scores) are independent of each other (that is, scores of one participant are not systematically related to scores of the other participants). This is commonly referred to as the assumption of independence. The test (dependent) variable is normally distributed within each of the two populations (as defined by the grouping variable). This is commonly referred to as the assumption of normality. The variances of the test (dependent) variable in the two populations are equal. This is commonly referred to as the assumption of homogeneity of variance.

Pagano (2004) said the independent-samples t-test is what we refer to as a robust test. That is, the t test is relatively insensitive (having little effect) to violations of normality and homogeneity of variance, depending on the sample size and the type and magnitude of the violation. If n1 = n2 and the size of each sample is equal to or greater than 30, the t test for independent groups may be used without appreciable error despite moderate violations of the normality and/or the homogeneity of variance assumptions. Sample sizes can be considered equal if the larger group is not more than

1½ times larger than the smaller group (Morgan, Leech, Gloeckner, & Barrett, 2004). If the variance in one group is more than 4 or 5 times larger than the variance in the other group – they are considered very different – and the homogeneity of variance assumption is violated. A variance ratio (Fmax) analysis can be obtained by dividing the lowest variance of a group into the highest group variance. Concern arises if the resulting ratio is 4-5 times, which indicates that the largest variance is 4 to 5 times the smallest variance (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). If there are extreme violations of these assumptions – with respect to normality and homogeneity of variance – an alternate (non-parametric) test such as the Mann-Whitney U test should be used instead of the independent-samples t test.

Multiple Linear Regression. Multiple regression is not just one technique but a family of techniques that can be used to explore the relationship between one continuous dependent variable and a number of independent variables or predictors (usually continuous), (Pallant, 2005). In hierarchical regression (also called sequential regression), the independent variables are entered into the equation in the order specified by the researcher based on theoretical grounds. Variables or sets of variables are entered in steps (or blocks), with each independent variable being assessed in terms of what it adds to the prediction of the dependent variable after the previous variables have been controlled for (Pallant, 2005).

Qualitative data analysis. Data collected by means of open-ended questions as well as focus group interviews has been analyzed. After the interviews, data were transcribed to keep record of what have been said during the interviews. During the session, audio recordings were taken as well as rich notes capturing the key participant experiences, words, and phrases. Field notes were proof read multiple times for the

researcher to begin to "feel" the experience and listen for words that brought meaning to the phenomenon. Coding of the field notes began as "the process of sorting your data into various categories that organize it and render it meaningful" and included the "defining what the data are all about" (Lofland et al., 2006). Once coding of concepts was completed, the process of categorizing (also known as themes), began by placing together concepts with shared meaning, thus allowing the reduction of large amount of data into fewer, more manageable, yet more broad, categories; a process known as categorical aggregation (Creswell, 2007). During the process of categorizing, codes, memos, or reminders of interesting concepts were written and reviewed continually during the research process. The final categories were placed in a table and used by the researcher to describe the findings and results of the research.

According to Lichtman (2009), qualitative data analysis is a process that entails coding what the interviewee says (a step called open-coding), then moving to general categories or themes (a step called axial coding) and from these themes beginning to develop working theories to explain key concepts (referred to as selective coding). During the analysis of the interview responses, the researcher classified the data in search of common themes, subthemes or similar dimensions of information collected from the respondents. Once the interview began, the researcher reviewed the interview guide for questioning but also remained flexible to ask appropriate probing questions to better understand the experiences. The interview guideline was designed not only to address the research question but was purposefully designed to sequence the questions, beginning with general questions and then moving to deeper questioning to better explore the phenomenon. Each actual audio recorded interview lasted approximately 50 minutes, and was captured with rich written field notes to insure

small but important details of the interview were not overlooked in the analysis phase. Full verbatim transcripts were completed. These were captured into single statements to express the opinions of the respondents on the issues were investigated. Detailed tabular statistical tools used for qualitative analysis are reported in Table 3.11 according to research question (RQ) as follows.

Table 3.11
Statistical Tools for Qualitative Data Analysis

Research Objectives	Test
Research Objective 8: To examine the skills that are needed by students for entering the hospitality profession	Interview

The strategy of inquiry was based on both qualitative and quantitative methods recognizing that all methods have limitations, researchers felt that biases inherent in any single method could neutralize or cancel the biases to the other methods (Creswell, 2009). Additionally, Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), using both methods in combination provides a better understanding of the research problems than either approach alone. The two methods build and support each other and are interconnected and interrelated so that the study appears as a cohesive whole rather that as fragmented isolated parts (Creswell, 2007). A convergent parallel design guided the mixing of the qualitative and quantitative data. This method is based on separate analysis of the qualitative interviews and the quantitative survey data, followed by merging of the data looking for similarities or differences in findings and final researcher interpretation. A convergent parallel design Occurs when the researcher uses concurrent timing to implement the quantitative and qualitative strands during the same phase of the research process, prioritizes the methods equally, and keeps the

strands independent during analysis and then mixes the results during the overall interpretation. (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011)

Summary

In the previous study, chapter 2 was provided a review of literature related to the critical problem of skills and proficiencies development required of the curriculum that prepares students for success in the workplace. The chapter explored the skill needs and expectations employers have of recent vocational college graduates they employ, including the current employability readiness of graduates and the role of previous work experience in students' skill development. In addition, the chapter provided the theoretical framework for the study. Therefore, this chapter (chapter 3) explains the research methodology of the study. It outlines research design, sampling method, research instruments, reliability and validity also data procedures in details. Prior to full implementation of the survey, a pilot study is carried out to test the validity of content and construction of the instrument. The study uses survey method to collect data for the quantitative approach. The quantitative data is analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 for Windows. The interview is needed to support the findings. The features of qualitative data collection is a set of interview protocol. The next chapter reported the data analysis of the study. Using a mixed method approach enables both methods findings to corroborate each other, in theory. This is in line with the ideas of triangulation and the methodological approach that qualitative and quantitative methods can be successfully mixed. The findings of the quantitative research and qualitative research are presented in Chapter Four. Chapter Five is a discussion chapter which combines the findings to demonstrate the corroboration that triangulation supports. The thesis ends in Chapter Five with conclusions

Chapter 4 Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis as presented in Chapter 3. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section discusses the sample profile and presents frequencies and percentage distribution of the respondents' profiles. The next section looks and discusses the findings of descriptive analysis. The final section discusses the result of inferential analysis.

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) MS – Window version 20. Descriptive statistics were used to report the profile of respondents and descriptive analysis findings on employability skills of hospitality vocational students between bakery and catering courses. Frequency measures including percentages, means and standard deviation were used at this phase. Inferential statistics used in this study were used to allow the researcher to decide whether the differences between two groups of respondent exist or not and also to investigate whether the dependent variables and independent variables had any relationship. Inferential statistics used in this study includes Man Whitney U, T-Test and Multiple Linear Logistic Regression. Qualitative research was conducted by structured interview to the students. Ten students participated in focus group discussion at the vocational college. Focus group discussion was carried out in English and Malay language as requested by the students and also to provide a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere for the interview session. However, during the process of transcription, reinterpretation and data analysis, all students were reported and interpreted into English. The research instrument was a structured interview guidelines with the themes, namely: Purpose/skills, Assessment, and Skills expected to gain more and employment. The time for the interview was determined based on the agreements

between respondents and researchers and the interview started with brief explanation of the research and the signing of the consent form. Results of the interview were converted into a transcript immediately after the interview and prior to the next interview. Transcripts were analyzed with open coding by researcher.

Profiles of Respondent

This part is about respondent's demographic background according to their own rating.

Demographic background of respondents. This study involved 841 vocational students from Vocational Colleges in Malaysia who are in hospitality field. Table 4.1 presents the respondent's profile according to gender, ethnicity, CGPA, father's occupation, mother's occupation, family income, location, program, internship upon graduation and internship with industry.

Table 4.1
Respondent's Demographic Profile

	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	347	41.3
Female	494	58.7
Ethnicity		
Malay	664	79.0
Chinese	121	14.4
Indian	20	2.4
Others	36	4.3
CGPA		
2.00 – 2.50	0	0
2.51 – 3.00	426	50.7
3.01 – 3.50	415	49.3
3.51 – 4.00	0	0
Father's Occupation		
Government servant	364	43.3

Private servant	205	24.4
Self - employed	212	25.2
Others	60	7.1
Mother's Occupation		
Government servant	126	15.0
Private servant	414	49.2
Self - employed	167	19.9
Others	134	15.9
Family Income		
Below RM2000.00	0	0
RM2001.00-RM3000.00	370	44.0
RM3001.00– RM4000.00	300	35.7
Above RM4000.00	171	20.3
Location		
Rural	463	55.1
Urban	378	44.9
Program		
Bakery & Pastry	463	55.1
Catering	378	44.9
Internship upon graduation		
Yes	841	100.0
No	0	0
Internship with industry		
Yes	841	100.0
No	0	0

Looking at the gender category, majority of the respondents are female (about 58.7 percent) and male are only 41.3 percent. Looking at the respondent profiles according to ethnicity, show that 79.0 percent of the respondents were Malay, 14.4 percent of them were Chinese, 2.4 percent of them were Indians also 4.3 percent of them were in other race. In term of CGPA category, show that majority of the respondents had CGPA 2.51 – 3.00 (50.7%). While 49.3 percent of the respondents are in range of 3.01 – 3.50. Looking at parental occupation of respondent's category,

majority of the respondents indicated that their father was working in government sector (43.3%). However, in terms of mother's occupation, most of the mothers of respondents were working in private sector (49.2 percent). According to the Table 4.1, in term of family income of the respondent category, the result shows that most of the respondents were from middle class family. Their family income mostly ranged from RM2001-RM3000 per month (44.0%). Meanwhile, 35.7 percent of the respondents indicated that their family income is between RM3001-RM4000. And 20.3 percent indicated that their family income is above RM4000 per month. According to the location category, the majority of the respondents are in rural area which represent 55.1 percent of the respondents while 44.9 percent are in urban area. Looking at the program category, four hundred sixty three of the respondents are in bakery course (55.1%) while 44.9 percent are in catering course. Table 4.1 also shows that hundred percent of the respondents are having internship upon graduation. Lastly, according to table 4.1, shows that hundred percent of the respondents are having internship with industry.

Descriptive Findings

The level of hospitality employability skills among vocational students. Research Question 1. What are the levels of hospitality employability skills among vocational students? In this section, the level of hospitality employability skills among vocational students are explored. The analysis report and the discussion in this part aims to answer the research question 1. The mean score of each level was analyzed by grouping the questions that were under the same construct together and sought the grand mean score. In order to interpret the mean score, QCA (2001) offer the most relevant interpretation of data (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2
Interpretation of Mean Score

Mean Score	Interpretation
1.00 – 2.33	Low
2.34 – 3.66	Medium
3.67 – 5.00	High

Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA, 2000). *Key Skills Units (Level 1 -5)*

The students' mean score of each items and construct collapse into three new groups, as seen in Table 4.2. The student's' mean score of each item and construct were interpreted into three levels. Mean score within 1.00 – 2.33 falls under the low employability skills level. Meanwhile, if the mean score falls within 2.34 – 3.66, the level of employability skills reaches the medium level. If the mean score within 3.67 – 5.00, it was interpreted as the high level of employability skills.

Table 4.3
Level of Competence in Communication Skills among Vocational Students

No	Level of Competence in Communication Skills	Mean	SD	Level
1	I am able to interact with customers in a polite and friendly manner	4.39	.58	High
2	I am able to ask questions and actively listen to customers to determine their needs	4.46	.52	High
3	I am able to provide clear and accurate information to customers and colleagues to ensure a positive hospitality experience	4.31	.50	High
4	I am able to interpret verbal and written information on hospitality products, services and operational procedures	4.41	.53	High
5	I am able to discuss operational and service difficulties with colleagues and supervisors	4.37	.50	High
6	I ask for more information about why a particular demand is being made to explore for underlying interests and ask why a position is important	4.38	.50	High
7	I listen fully and affirm that I understand what the other person has said as a sign of respect to the speaker	4.37	.53	High
8	The best way to get the listening I need is to make the other person feel listened to first	4.20	.46	High
9	In negotiations I try to direct the focus away from stated positions and explore for interests and common solutions	4.37	.61	High

10	When someone says something I'm not sure about I ask for clarification	4.31	.57	High
	Overall	4.35	.53	High

Students in vocational colleges have self-evaluated their competency in employability skills. In terms of communication skills, the hospitality students have provided higher scores for all the items. For instance, the self-evaluation for ability to interact with customers in a polite and friendly manner is high (M=4.39, SD=0.58). This shows that students perceived that they have high competency in this skill. In addition, the self-evaluation was the highest for the ability to ask questions and actively listen to customers to determine their needs (M=4.46, SD=0.52). Even though the mean for ability to get the listening need is to make the other person feel listened to first is high (M=4.20, SD=0.46) but this is the lowest mean compared to other items in communication skills.

Table 4.4
Level of Competence in Teamwork Skills among Vocational Students

No	Level of Competence in Teamwork Skills	Mean	SD	Level
1	I am able to work as a team member, taking instructions from others and understanding own role in servicing the needs of the hospitality customer	4.23	.52	High
2	I am able to support other team members to coordinate hospitality operational and service activities to achieve quality service delivery of the hospitality product	4.18	.54	High
3	I am able to respect the cultural diversity of team members and seek their assistance to service the culturally diverse needs of hospitality customers	4.33	.52	High
4	I am able to work as a kitchen team member, taking instructions from others and understanding own role in servicing the needs of the hospitality customer	4.40	.51	High
5	I am able to support other team members to coordinate operational activities in the kitchen to ensure a positive dining experience for the hospitality customer	4.23	.43	High
6	Team members are held accountable for the decisions they make	4.23	.45	High
7	Work assignments are distributed fairly	4.28	.47	High

8	Sufficient effort is made to get the opinions and ideas of the employees.	4.33	.59	High
9	There is good alignment between my department and other with whom I need to coordinate	4.40	.58	High
10	My department knows enough about other related departments within the company	4.34	.58	High
	Overall	4.29	.51	High

As displayed in Table 4.4, in terms of teamwork skills, the hospitality students have provided higher scores for all the items. For instance, the self-evaluation for ability to support other team members to coordinate operational activities in the kitchen to ensure a positive dining experience for the hospitality customer. (M=4.23, SD=0.43). This shows that students perceived that they have high competency in this skill. In addition, the self-evaluation was the highest for the ability to ask questions and actively listen to customers to determine their needs (M=4.46, SD=0.526). Even though the mean for ability to support other team members to coordinate hospitality operational and service activities to achieve quality service delivery of the hospitality product is high (M=4.18, SD=0.54), but this is the lowest mean compared to other items in teamwork skills.

Table 4.5
Level of Competence in Problem Solving Skills among Vocational Students

No	Level of Competence in Problem Solving Skills	Mean	SD	Level
1	I am able to think about problems that relate to own role in hospitality operational and service activities	4.29	.52	High
2	I am able to avoid deadline problems by planning own day-to-day operational activities	4.35	.52	High
3	I am able to identify and resolving routine customer or operational problems using predetermined policies and procedures to guide solutions	4.33	.59	High
4	I am able to clarify the extent of problems and requesting assistance from team members and supervisors to solve operational and service issues.	4.41	.61	High

5	I am able to create a plan of action to solve problems.	4.43	.57	High
6	I am able to analyze facts & testing assumption	4.39	.55	High
7	Defining the problem & contributing factors	4.36	.53	High
8	Developing creative, innovative &/or practical solutions	4.42	.51	High
9	Showing initiative in identifying & solving problem	4.34	.47	High
10	Solving problems independently & in teams	4.32	.51	High
	Overall	4.36	.53	High

As displayed in Table 4.5, in terms of problem solving skills, the hospitality students have provided higher scores for all the items. For instance, the self-evaluation for ability to identify and resolving routine customer or operational problems using predetermined policies and procedures to guide solutions (M=4.33, SD=0.59). This shows that students perceived that they have high competency in this skill. In addition, the self-evaluation was the highest for the ability to create a plan of action to solve problems (M=4.43, SD=0.57). Even though the mean for ability to think about problems that relate to own role in hospitality operational and service activities is high (M=4.29, SD=0.52), but this is the lowest mean compared to other items in problem solving skills.

Table 4.6
Level of Competence in Initiative and Enterprise Skills among Vocational Students

No	Level of Competence in Initiative and Enterprise Skills	Mean	SD	Level
1	I am able to identify and discuss with supervisors on better ways to organize hospitality operational and service activities	4.18	.45	High
2	I am able to seek information on new technologies and suggest their use to supervisors	4.36	.55	High
3	I am able to provide suggestions for better customer service provision	4.37	.57	High
4	I am able to identify and suggest ways to improve kitchen operations and service efficiency	4.41	.52	High

5	I am able to generate and suggesting ideas for new or improved recipes and menu items	4.45	.51	High
6	I am able to identify opportunities not obvious to others	4.41	.54	High
7	I am able to assess the competitive advantage of ideas	4.40	.50	High
8	Identifying customer or client requirements	4.39	.51	High
9	I am able to being creative, initiating ideas & innovative solutions	4.32	.52	High
10	I am able to use a range of business communication methods	4.53	.57	High
	Overall	4.38	.52	High

As displayed in Table 4.13, in terms of initiative and enterprise skills, the hospitality students have provided higher scores for all the items. For instance, the self-evaluation for ability to being creative, initiating ideas & innovative solutions (M=4.32, SD=0.52). This shows that students perceived that they have high competency in this skill. In addition, the self-evaluation was the highest for the ability to use a range of business communication methods (M=4.53, SD=0.57).

Even though the mean for ability to identify and discuss with supervisors on better ways to organize hospitality operational and service activities is high (M=4.18, SD=0.45), but this is the lowest mean compared to other items in initiative and enterprise skills.

Table 4.7
Level of Competence in Planning and Organizing Skills among Vocational Students

No	Level of Competence in Planning and Organizing Skills	Mean	SD	Level
1	I am able to collect and organize customer, product and procedural information to efficiently coordinate hospitality, operational and service activities	4.31	.52	High
2	I am able to plan both operational and daily activities to ensure a smooth workflow which delivers a positive service outcome for hospitality customers	4.40	.61	High
3	I am able to work towards agreement with others.	4.35	.48	High

4	I am able to follow workplace rules	4.50	.54	High
5	I am able to follow the work directions	4.30	.53	High
6	Managing time & priorities – setting milestones	4.37	.51	High
7	Managing tasks - delegating, coordinating, monitoring	4.32	.54	High
8	Managing people - training, developing, motivating, giving feedback, supervising	4.40	.50	High
9	Being resourceful, taking initiative & making decisions	4.41	.50	High
10	Establishing evaluation criteria & participating in continuous improvement	4.32	.54	High
	Overall	4.36	.52	High

As displayed in Table 4.7, in terms of planning and organizing skills, the hospitality students have provided higher scores for all the items. For instance, the self-evaluation for ability to establish evaluation criteria & participating in continuous improvement (M=4.32, SD=0.54). This shows that students perceived that they have high competency in this skill. In addition, the self-evaluation was the highest for the ability to follow workplace rules (M=4.50, SD=0.54).

Even though the mean for ability to follow the work directions is high (M=4.30, SD=0.53) but this is the lowest mean compared to other items in planning and organizing skills.

Table 4.8
Level of Competence in Self-Management Skills among Vocational Students

No	Level of Competence in Self-Management Skills	Mean	SD	Level
1	I am able to following policies and procedures for legal compliance	4.39	.56	High
2	I am able to take responsibility for servicing the hospitality customer and knowing when to refer difficulties to supervisors	4.35	.49	High
3	I am able to seek feedback and guidance from supervisors on success in hospitality operational and service activities.	4.41	.49	High
4	I am able to take responsibility for own job role in servicing the hospitality customer	4.36	.51	High

	and for resolving operational problems in the kitchen			
5	I am able to think about own work performance and seeking feedback and guidance on success in cooking activities	4.40	.52	High
6	Having a personal vision & goals	4.51	.53	High
7	Evaluating & monitoring own performance	4.36	.55	High
8	Having knowledge & confidence in own ideas & vision	4.32	.62	High
9	Articulating own ideas & vision	4.43	.61	High
10	Taking responsibility	4.40	.53	High
	Overall	4.39	.54	High

As displayed in Table 4.15, in terms of self-management skills, the hospitality students have provided higher scores for all the items. For instance, the self-evaluation for ability to evaluate and monitoring own performance (M=4.36, SD=0.55). This shows that students perceived that they have high competency in this skill. In addition, the self-evaluation was the highest for the ability to have a personal vision and goals (M=4.51, SD=0.53). Even though the mean for ability to have knowledge and confidence in own ideas and vision is high (M=4.32, SD=0.62) but this is the lowest mean compared to other items in self-management skills.

Table 4.9
Level of Competence in Learning How to Learn Skills among Vocational Students

No	Level of Competence in Learning How to Learn Skills	Mean	SD	Level
1	I am able to participate in activities to learn new things about the hospitality industry, new operational tasks and better ways of providing hospitality service	4.45	.57	High
2	I am able to seek and sharing information with colleagues on new hospitality products and services.	4.24	.48	High
3	I am able to know own product knowledge and cookery skill strengths and weaknesses, being aware of opportunities to learn and participate in commercial	4.29	.58	High

	cookery professional development activities			
4	I am able to seek and sharing information with colleagues on new food trends, products, services and suppliers	4.31	.59	High
5	I am able to coach others in job skill	4.43	.59	High
6	Contributing to the learning community at the workplace	4.27	.50	High
7	Using a range of mediums to learn – mentoring, peer support, networking, information technology (IT), courses	4.42	.53	High
8	Applying learning to 'technical' issues e.g. learning about products & 'people' issues e.g. interpersonal and cultural aspects of work	4.30	.56	High
9	Having enthusiasm for ongoing learning	4.31	.53	High
10	Being willing to learn in any setting – on & off the job	4.47	.57	High
	Overall	4.34	.55	High

As displayed in Table 4.9, in terms of learning how to learn skills, the hospitality students have provided higher scores for all the items. For instance, the self-evaluation for ability to use a range of mediums to learn – mentoring, peer support, networking, information technology (IT), courses (M=4.42, SD=0.53). This shows that students perceived that they have high competency in this skill. In addition, the self-evaluation was the highest for the ability to being willing to learn in any setting – on and off the job (M=4.47, SD=0.57). Even though the mean for ability to seek and sharing information with colleagues on new hospitality products and services is high (M=4.24, SD=0.48) but this is the lowest mean compared to other items in learning how to learn skills.

Table 4.10
Level of Competence in Information and Technology Skills among Vocational Students

No	Level of Competence in Information Technology Skills	Mean	SD	Level

1	I am able to understand the operating capability of tools and equipment and selecting and safely using them	4.35	.51	High
2	I am able to select and using the right personal protective equipment to manage personal safety in the workplace.	4.34	.52	High
3	I am able to understand the operating capability of computer systems software and information systems that assist in commercial cookery activities	4.38	.56	High
4	I am able to use technology to communicate with others.	4.28	.49	High
5	I am able to adapt the changes in technology.	4.37	.52	High
6	Having a range of basic IT skills	4.24	.45	High
7	Applying IT as a management tool	4.36	.50	High
8	Using IT to organize data	4.36	.48	High
9	Being willing to learn new IT skills	4.37	.53	High
10	Having the appropriate physical capacity	4.40	.57	High
	Overall	4.34	.51	High

As displayed in Table 4.10, in terms of information and technology (IT) skills, the hospitality students have provided higher scores for all the items. For instance, the self-evaluation for ability to understand the operating capability of computer systems software and information systems that assist in commercial cookery activities (M=4.38, SD=0.56). This shows that students perceived that they have high competency in this skill. In addition, the self-evaluation was the highest for the ability for having the appropriate physical capacity (M=4.40, SD=0.57). Even though the mean for ability for having a range of basic IT skills is high (M=4.24, SD=0.45) but this is the lowest mean compared to other items in information and technology (IT) skills.

Table 4.11
Level of Competence in Resource Management Skills among Vocational Students

No	Level of Competence in Resource Management Skills	Mean	SD	Level
1	I am able to control kitchen resources	4.46	.53	High
2	I am able to manage facilities in the kitchen	4.39	.56	High

3	I am able to manage the cash flow of money in the kitchen	4.37	.54	High
4	I am able to arrange stock in the kitchen	4.36	.56	High
5	I am able to managing one's own time and the time of others	4.46	.51	High
6	Determining how money will be spent to get the work done, and accounting for these expenditures	4.36	.56	High
7	Obtaining and seeing to the appropriate use of equipment, facilities, and materials needed to do certain work	4.37	.54	High
8	Motivating, developing, and directing people as they work, identifying the best people for the job	4.32	.58	High
9	We are assigned challenging jobs to charge our enthusiasm and develop our skills.	4.34	.55	High
10	We are encouraged to participate in various seminars and workshops	4.43	.51	High
	Overall	4.38	.54	High

As displayed in Table 4.11, in terms of resource management skills, the hospitality students have provided higher scores for all the items. For instance, the self-evaluation for encouragement to participate in various seminars and workshops (M=4.43, SD=0.51). This shows that students perceived that they have high competency in this skill. In addition, the self-evaluation was the highest for the ability to control kitchen resources (M=4.46, SD=0.53). Even though the mean for ability for motivating, developing, and directing people as they work, identifying the best people for the job is high (M=4.32, SD=0.58) but this is the lowest mean compared to other items in resource management skills.

Table 4.12
Level of Competence and Importance in Entrepreneurship Skills among Vocational Students

No	Level of Competence in Entrepreneurship Skills	Mean	SD	Level
1	I am constantly seeing business opportunities or ideas that have potential commercial value	4.39	.54	High

2	I am flexible and I am able to adapt to changes and surprises quickly and successfully	4.45	.52	High
3	I thrive on learning and I am constantly seeking out new information that can help me with my business.	4.24	.51	High
4	I am risk tolerant and I am able to successfully manage risk associated with creating and growing a business	4.32	.57	High
5	I am motivated by success and driven to do well	4.33	.53	High
6	I do things my own way. Nobody needs to tell me to get going	4.36	.54	High
7	If someone gets me started, I keep going all right	4.39	.54	High
8	Easy does it. I don't put myself out until I have to	4.41	.54	High
9	I like to have a plan before I start. I'm usually the one who lines things up	4.36	.56	High
10	I do all right unless things get too complicated. Then I may cop out	4.31	.54	High
	Overall	4.35	.53	High

As displayed in Table 4.12, in terms of entrepreneurship skills, the hospitality students have provided higher scores for all the items. For instance, the self-evaluation for ability to risk tolerant and able to successfully manage risk associated with creating and growing a business (M=4.32, SD=0.57). This shows that students perceived that they have high competency in this skill. In addition, the self-evaluation was the highest for flexible and adapt to changes and surprises quickly and successfully (M=4.45, SD=0.52). Even though the mean for thrive on learning and constantly seeking out new information that can help with my business.is high (M=4.24, SD=0.51) but this is the lowest mean compared to other items in entrepreneurship skills.

Table 4.13
Level of Competence in Basic Skills among Vocational Students

No	Level of Competence in Basic Skills	Mean	SD	Level
1	I am able to calculate quantities and portions against orders, costs per person; function price and profitability	4.38	.60	High

2	I am able to produce food requisitions for specific client numbers	4.34	.52	High
3	I am able to control quantities of stock	4.41	.61	High
4	I am able to create customer accounts and tally amounts owing	4.43	.50	High
5	I am able to read and interpreting numerical information such as recipes and surveys	4.31	.57	High
6	I can use basic mathematical functions of plus, minus, multiply and divide	4.36	.53	High
7	I can solve problems using math and science concepts	4.34	.49	High
8	I can learn very quickly	4.34	.54	High
9	Skills related to security and maintenance	4.29	.54	High
10	Foreign languages	4.32	.51	High
	Overall	4.35	.54	High

As displayed in Table 4.13, in terms of basic skills, the hospitality students have provided higher scores for all the items. For instance, the self-evaluation for ability to read and interpreting numerical information such as recipes and surveys (M=4.31, SD=0.57). This shows that students perceived that they have high competency in this skill. In addition, the self-evaluation was the highest to control quantities of stock (M=4.41, SD=0.61). Even though the mean for skills related to security and maintenance is high (M=4.29, SD=0.54) but this is the lowest mean compared to other items in basic skills.

Table 4.14
Level of Competence in Leadership Skills among Vocational Students

No	Level of Competence in Leadership Skills	Mean	SD	Level
1	I am effective with the detailed aspects of my work.	4.43	.53	High
2	I usually know ahead of time how people will respond to a new idea	4.41	.54	High
3	I am able to manage people and resources and it is one of my strengths	4.43	.52	High
4	I enjoy discussing organizational values and philosophy	4.29	.57	High
5	I am flexible about making changes in our organization	4.31	.52	High

6	I am effective with the detailed aspects of my work	4.40	.53	High
7	I usually know ahead of time how people will respond to a new idea or proposal.	4.31	.56	High
8	I use my emotional energy to motivate others.	4.43	.56	High
9	Obtaining and allocating resources is a challenging aspect of my job.	4.34	.52	High
10	Making strategic plans for my company appeals to me.	4.39	.55	High
	Overall	4.37	.54	High

As displayed in Table 4.14, in terms of leadership skills, the hospitality students have provided higher scores for all the items. For instance, the self-evaluation for ability to making strategic plans for the company appeals (M=4.39, SD=0.55). This shows that students perceived that they have high competency in this skill. In addition, the self-evaluation was the highest for the using emotional energy to motivate others (M=4.43, SD=0.56). Even though the mean for discussing organizational values and philosophy is high (M=4.29, SD=0.57) but this is the lowest mean compared to other items in leadership skills.

Table 4.15
Level of Competence in Working with Others Skills among Vocational Students

No	Level of Competence in Working with Others Skills	Mean	SD	Level
1	I am good with coming up ideas	4.43	.51	High
2	I get on well with other people	4.49	.49	High
3	I am able to talk to other people I don't know	4.56	.56	High
4	I can be a leader if the task suit to me	4.86	.48	High
5	I don't mind receiving feedback on my work	4.58	.58	High
6	I enjoy working as part of a team	4.35	.50	High
7	I like to contribute to common goals	4.24	.50	High
8	I enjoy the "give and take" of working in a group	4.27	.49	High
9	Make decisions co-operatively within the team.	4.32	.51	High
10	Contribute to the team by completing the tasks assigned to you on time	4.07	.90	High
	Overall	4.31	.55	High

As displayed in Table 4.15, in terms of working with others skills, the hospitality students have provided higher scores for all the items. For instance, the self-evaluation for ability to make decisions co-operatively within the team (M=4.32, SD=0.51). This shows that students perceived that they have high competency in this skill. In addition, the self-evaluation was the highest for being a leader if the task suits (M=4.86, SD=0.48). Even though the mean for contributing to the team by completing the tasks assigned on time is high (M=4.07, SD=0.90) but this is the lowest mean compared to other items in working with others skills.

Table 4.16
Level of Competence in Ethical and Professional Moral Skills among Vocational Students

No	Level of Competence in Ethical and Professional Skills	Mean	SD	Level
1	Shares complete and accurate information.	4.22	.73	High
2	Maintains confidentiality and meets own commitments.	4.26	.60	High
3	Adheres to organizational policies and procedures	4.07	.61	High
4	Adapts to changing work environments, work priorities and organizational needs	4.15	.48	High
5	Able to effectively deal with change and diverse people	4.13	.70	High
6	Takes personal responsibility for job performance.	4.23	.66	High
7	Completes work in a timely and consistent manner.	4.37	.54	High
8	Sticks to commitments	4.32	.52	High
9	Displays energy and enthusiasm in approaching the job also commits to putting in additional effort.	4.27	.48	High
10	Maintains high level of productivity and self-direction	4.18	.81	High
	Overall	4.21	.61	High

As displayed in Table 4.16, in terms of ethical and professional moral skills, the hospitality students have provided higher scores for all the items. For instance, the self-evaluation for ability to display energy and enthusiasm in approaching the job

also commits to putting in additional effort (M=4.27, SD=0.48). This shows that students perceived that they have high competency in this skill. In addition, the self-evaluation was the highest for sticks to commitments (M=4.32, SD=0.52). Even though the mean for adheres to organizational policies and procedures is high (M=4.07, SD=0.61) but this is the lowest mean compared to other items in ethical and professional moral skills.

Table 4.17
Level of Competence in Technical and Vocational Skills among Vocational Students

No	Level of Competence in Technical and Vocational Skills	Mean	SD	Level
1	Management skills (strategic management, marketing, financial management, personnel management, operations management/ logistics, project/events management, knowledge management, stock management) supervisory skills (e.g. cost control, staff management and development)	4.11	.71	High
2	knowledge of specialist IT software (e.g. advance reservation systems, yield management, estate management, customer flow design)	4.18	.72	High
3	Knowledge of relevant employment law (e.g. health and safety, working time) and trading standards (e.g. hygiene, trade descriptions)	4.29	.68	High
4	product knowledge (e.g. wines and spirits, cocktail recipes, nutrition/diet, food production)	3.47	.80	Medium
5	local tourism knowledge (venues, events and transport/travel)	3.64	.87	Medium
6	Knowledge of own and guest cultures	3.68	.70	High
7	Specific reception and telephone skills	3.78	.83	High
8	food and drink storage	3.90	.57	High
9	cooking, food preparation	4.07	.81	High
10	food and bar service skills	3.88	.70	High
	Overall	3.96	.73	High

As displayed in Table 4.17, in terms of technical and vocational skills, the hospitality students have provided higher scores for all the items. For instance, the self-

evaluation for ability in management skills for example strategic management, marketing, financial management, personnel management, operations management/ logistics, project/events management, knowledge management, stock management also supervisory skills such as cost control, staff management and development (M=4.11, SD=0.71). This shows that students perceived that they have high competency in this skill. In addition, the self-evaluation was the highest for Knowledge of relevant employment law for example health and safety, working time also trading standards such as hygiene and trade descriptions (M=4.29, SD=0.68). The mean for product knowledge such as wines and spirits, cocktail recipes, nutrition/diet, food production is medium (M=3.47, SD=0.80) and this is the lowest mean compared to other items in technical and vocational skills.

Table 4.18
Level of Competence in Hospitality Skills among Vocational Students

No	Level of Competence in Hospitality Skills	Mean	SD	Level
1	Communication skill	4.35	.53	High
2	Teamwork skill	4.29	.57	High
3	Problem solving skill	4.36	.53	High
4	Initiative and Enterprise skill	4.38	.52	High
5	Planning and Organizing skill	4.36	.52	High
6	Self-management skill	4.39	.54	High
7	Learning how to learn skill	4.34	.55	High
8	Information technology skill	4.34	.51	High
9	Resource management skill	4.38	.54	High
10	Entrepreneurship skill	4.35	.53	High
11	Basic skill	4.35	.54	High
12	Leadership skill	4.37	.54	High
13	Working with others skill	4.31	.55	High
14	Ethical and professional moral skill	4.21	.61	High
15	Technical and Vocational skill	3.96	.73	High
	Overall	4.31	.55	High

As displayed in Table 4.18, in terms of hospitality skills, the hospitality students have provided higher scores for all the items. For instance, the self-evaluation for communication skill (M=4.35, SD=0.53), teamwork skill (M=4.29,

SD= .57), problem solving skill (M=4.36, SD= .53), Initiative and enterprise skill (M=4.38, SD= .52), planning and organizing (M=4.36, SD=.52), Self-management skills (M4.39, SD=.54), learning how to learn (M=4.34, SD= .55), information technology skill (M=4.34, SD= .51), resource management skill (M=4.38, SD= . 54), entrepreneurship skill (M=4.35, SD= .53), basic skill (M= 4.35, SD= .54), leadership skill (M=4.37, SD = .54), working with others skill (M=4.31, SD = .55), ethical and professional moral skill (M= 4.21, SD = .61). This shows that students perceived that they have high competency in this skill. In addition, the self-evaluation was the highest for self-management skill (M=4.39, SD=0.54). Even though the mean for technical and vocational skill is high (M=3.96, SD=0.55) but this is the lowest mean compared to other items in hospitality skills.

The differences of competency hospitality employability skills among male and female vocational students. Research Question 2. Are there any differences in competency perceived level by gender for vocational students majoring in hospitality?

In addition to the questionnaire, the differences of competency hospitality employability skills among male and female vocational students are explored. The analysis report and the discussion in this part aim to answer the research question 2.

Independent Samples T – test is conducted to answer the research question. Result of Indepndent Samples T-test is shown in the tables.

Table 4.19
Summary of Independent T-Test for both group on Skills by Gender

Skills	Gender	N	SD	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
				Lower	Upper	F	Sig	Mean Difference	T	df	p
communication	Male	347	2.35	-.64	-.03	10.30	.00	-.34	-2.15	694.74	0.31
	Female	494	2.12	-.65	-.03						
teamwork	Male	347	2.11	-.58	-.06	16.08	.00	-.32	-2.49	839.00	0.17
	Female	494	1.70	-.59	-.05						
problem solving	Male	347	1.92	-.47	.06	.37	.53	-.20	-1.50	839.00	0.13
	Female	494	1.94	-.47	.06						
initiative	Male	347	2.10	-.36	.18	.87	.35	-.09	-.66	839.00	0.50
	Female	494	1.93	-.37	.18						
planning & organizing	Male	347	1.78	.03	.54	3.18	.07	.29	2.21	839.00	0.02
	Female	494	1.92	.03	.54						
self-management	Male	347	2.16	-.02	.60	3.07	.08	.28	1.79	839.00	0.07
	Female	494	2.38	-.02	.59						
learning	Male	347	1.81	.34	.91	13.16	.00	.62	4.46	823.26	0.00
	Female	494	2.25	.35	.90						
information technology	Male	347	2.01	.44	1.01	3.11	.07	.73	5.03	839.00	0.00
	Female	494	2.12	.44	1.01						
resource management	Male	347	2.03	-.52	-.02	17.57	.00	-.27	-2.06	659.93	0.03
	Female	494	1.70	-.53	-.01						
entrepreneurship	Male	347	1.90	.19	.75	1.85	.17	.47	3.36	839.00	0.00
	Female	494	2.08	.20	.74						
basic	Male	347	2.06	.61	1.18	0.02	.87	.90	6.24	839.00	0.00
	Female	494	2.05	.61	1.18						
leadership	Male	347	1.74	-.03	.54	25.85	.00	.25	1.81	835.31	0.70

	Female	494	2.32	-.02	.53						
working with others	Male	347	2.29	-.622	-.06	17.57	.00	-.34	-2.34	626.21	0.19
	Female	494	1.79	-.634	-.05						
ethical	Male	347	3.01	-1.177	-.40	13.66	.00	-.78	-3.90	688.92	0.00
	Female	494	2.68	-1.18	-.39						
tech vocational	Male	347	2.90	-.27	.46	5.09	.02	.09	.49	668.75	.622
	Female	494	2.48	-.28	.47						
competence	Male	347	8.49	.04	2.53	4.61	.03	1.28	2.07	788.14	0.39
	Female	494	9.40	.06	2.51						

An Independent Samples T – test is conducted to compare between male and female on Communication Skills. Male is with N = 347 while in female is N = 494. From the analysis, the result shows that there is no significant difference between male (M=43.42, SD=2.35) and female (M=43.76, SD=2.12), t (694.74) = -2.15, p = .31 on Communication Skills. The mean score of female on communication skills is higher than mean, these results suggest that female really does not have an effect on communication skills.

Based on Table 4.19, the result shows that there is no significant difference between male (M=42.80, SD=2.11) and female (M=43.12, SD=1.70), t (839) = -2.49, p = .17 on Teamwork Skills. The mean score of female on teamwork skills is higher than mean score of male. Thus, the results provide evident to conclude that female are more concerned about their teamwork than male students.

In term of problem solving skills, there is no significant difference between male (M=43.56, SD = 1.92), and female (M = 43.76, SD = 1.94), t (839) = -1.50, p = .13. Thus, male and female students do not differ in term of problem skills.

From the analysis on initiative skills, the result shows that there is no significant difference between male (M = 43.82, SD = 2.10) and female (M = 43.91, SD = 1.93), t (839) = -.66, p = .50. Thus, male and female students do not differ in term of initiatives skills.

Based on Table 4.19, in term on planning skills the result shows that there is significant difference between male (M = 43.88, SD = 1.78) and female (M = 43.59, SD =1.92), t (839) = 2.21, p = .02. Thus, male and female students differ in term of planning skills.

In term of self-management skills, there is no significant difference between male (M = 44.14, SD = 2.16), and female (M = 43.85, SD = 2.38), t (839) = -1.79, p = .07. Thus, male and female students do not differ in term of self-management skills

From the analysis on learning how to learn skills, there is a significant difference between male (M = 43.91, SD = 1.81), and female (M = 43.28, SD = 2.25), t (823.26) = 4.46, p = .00. The mean score for male is higher than mean score for female. It can be concluded that, male are more willing to know how to learn.

Based on Table 4.19 on technology skills, there is a significant difference between male (M = 43.93, SD = 2.01) and female (M = 43.19, SD = 2.12), t (839) = 5.03, p = .00. Thus, male and female students differ in term of technology skills.

In term on resource management skills, the result shows that there is a significant difference between male (M = 43.75, SD = 2.03), and female (M = 44.03, SD = 1.70), t (659.93) = -2.06, p = .03. The mean score for male is lower than mean score of female. Thus, the result provide evident to conclude that female is more concerned on resource management skills.

From the analysis on entrepreneurship skills, there is a significant difference between male (M = 43.89, SD = 1.90) and female (M = 43.41, SD = 2.08), t (839) = 3.36, p =.00. Thus, male and female students differ in term of entrepreneurship skills.

Based on Table 4.19 on basic skills, the result shows that there is a significant difference between male (M = 44.09, SD = 2.06) and female (M = 43.19, SD = 2.05), t (839) = 6.243, p = .000. Thus, male and female students differ in term of basic skills.

In term of leadership skills, the result shows that there is no significant difference between male (M = 43.93, SD = 43.68) and female (M = 43.68, SD = 2.32), t (835.31) =

1.81, p = .70. The mean score of male is higher than mean score of female on leadership skills. Thus, the result suggests male really does not have an effect on leadership skills.

From the analysis on working with others skills, there is no significant difference between male (M = 43.02, SD = 2.29) and female (M = 43.36, SD = 2.29), t (626.21) = -2.34, p = 0.19. The mean score of male is lower than mean score of female on working with others skills. Thus, it can be concluded that female does not have an effect on working with others skill.

Based on Table 4.19 on ethic skills, there is a significance difference between male (M = 41.76, SD = 3.01) and female (M = 42.55, SD =2.68), t (688.92) = -3.90, p = .00. The mean score of male is lower than mean sore of female. Thus, the result suggests female really does have an effect on ethic skills.

In term on technical and vocational skills, the result show that there is no significant difference between male (M = 39.10, SD = 2.90) and female (M = 39.01, SD = 2.48), t (688.75), p = .62. The mean score of male is higher than mean score of female. However, the findings show that male and female do not differ in terms of technical and vocational skills.

Based on Table 4.19, in addition to the questionnaire, the differences of competency employability skills among male and female vocational students show that there is no significant difference between male (M = 649.06, SD = 8.49) and female (M = 647.77, SD = 9.40), t (788.14) = 2.072 , p = 0.39. The mean score of male is higher than mean score of female. Thus, the result provides evident that male are more competent in hospitality employability skills compared to female student in vocational colleges.

The differences of competency hospitality employability skills among rural and urban. Research Question 3. Are there any differences in competency perceived level among between rural and urban vocational students majoring in hospitality? In addition to the questionnaire, the differences in terms of hospitality employability skills among rural and urban vocational students are explored. The analysis report and the discussion in this part aim to answer the research question 3.

Independent Samples T – test is conducted to answer the research question. Comparison is made between urban and rural students to determine whether there are differences in terms of hospitality employability skills between urban and rural students.

Table 4.20 *Summary of Independent T-Test for both group on Skills by rural and urban area*

Skills	Area	N	SD	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
				Lower	Upper	F	Sig	Mean difference	T	df	*p*
communication	Rural	492	2.18	.01	.62	.59	.44	-.34	2.02	730.23	.04
	Urban	349	2.27	.01	.62						
teamwork	Rural	492	1.89	-.26	.24	.23	.62	-.32	-.07	839.00	.93
	Urban	349	1.87	-.26	.24						
problem solving	Rural	492	1.98	-.31	.22	1.62	.20	-.20	-.32	839.00	.74
	Urban	349	1.87	-.30	.21						
initiative	Rural	492	2.10	-.18	.36	7.00	.00	-.09	.66	796.54	.50
	Urban	349	1.87	-.17	.36						
planning &	Rural	492	1.87	-.49	.02	.01	.91	.29	-1.78	839.00	.07
organising	Urban	349	1.87	-.49	.02						
self-	Rural	492	2.37	-.39	.23	2.74	.09	.28	-.47	839.00	.63
management	Urban	349	2.18	-.38	.23						
learning	Rural	492	2.10	-.26	.31	.07	.77	.62	.19	839.00	.84
	Urban	349	2.11	-.26	.31						
information	Rural	492	2.08	-.52	.05	.52	.46	.73	-1.57	839.00	.11
technology	Urban	349	2.12	-.52	.05						
resource	Rural	492	1.81	-.17	.33	1.92	.16	-.27	.06	839.00	.54
management	Urban	349	1.89	-.17	.33						
entrepreneurship	Rural	492	2.07	-.34	.21	.16	.68	.47	-.43	839.00	.66
	Urban	349	1.96	-.33	.21						
basic	Rural	492	2.09	.08	.66	.44	.50	.90	2.54	839.00	.01
	Urban	349	2.11	.08	.66						
leadership	Rural	492	2.04	-.74	-.16	.82	.36	.25	-3.07	839.00	.00
	Urban	349	2.17	-.74	-.16						
	Rural	492	1.97	.12	.68	3.75	.05	-.34	2.88	839.00	.00

working with others	Urban	349	2.06	.12	.68						
ethical	Rural	492	2.74	-.12	.66	6.50	.01	-.78	1.35	839.00	.17
	Urban	349	2.99	-.12	.66						
tech vocational	Rural	492	2.44	-.06	.66	1.92	.16	.09	1.55	661.84	.12
	Urban	349	2.93	-.07	.67						
competence	Rural	492	9.11	-.49	1.99	.051	.82	1.28	1.18	839.00	.23
	Urban	349	8.97	-.48	1.99						

An Independent Samples T – test is conducted to compare between rural and urban on Communication Skills. Rural is with N = 349 while in urban is N = 492. From the analysis, the result shows that there is a significant difference between rural (M=43.75, SD=2.18) and urban (M=43.43, SD=2.27), t (730.23) = 2.02, p = .04 on Communication Skills. This shows that there is a significant difference between urban and rural students in terms of communication skills.

Based on table 4.20, the result shows that there is no significant difference between rural (M=42.98, SD=1.89) and urban (M=43.00, SD=1.87), t (839) = -.07, p = .93 on Teamwork Skills. This shows that there is no significant difference between urban and rural students in terms of teamwork skills.

In term of problem solving skills, there is no significant difference between rural (M=43.66, SD = 1.98), and urban (M = 43.71, SD = 1.87), t (839) = -.32, p = .74. This shows that there is no significant difference between urban and rural students in terms of problem solving skills.

From the analysis on initiative skills, the result shows that there is no significant difference between rural (M = 43.91, SD = 2.10) and urban (M = 43.8223, SD = 1.87312), t (796.54) = .66, p = .50. The mean score of urban is lower than mean score of rural on initiative skills. Thus, rural and urban students do not differ in term of initiative skills.

Based on Table 4.20, in term on planning skills the result shows that there is no significant difference between rural (M = 43.61, SD = 1.87) and urban (M = 43.85, SD = 1.87), t (839) = -1.78, p = .07. The mean score of urban is higher than mean score of rural on planning skills. Thus, rural and urban students do not differ in term of planning skills.

In term of self-management skills, there is no significant difference between rural (M = 43.94, SD = 2.37), and urban (M = 44.02, SD = 2.18), t (839) = -.47, p = .63. The mean score of urban is higher than mean score of rural on self-management skills. Thus, rural and urban students do not differ in term of self-management skills.

From the analysis on learning how to learn skills, there is no significant difference between rural (M = 43.55, SD = 2.10) and urban (M = 43.52, SD = 2.11), t (839) = .19, p = .84. The mean score of urban is lower than mean score of rural on learning how to learn skills. Thus, rural and urban students do not differ in term of learning how to learn skills.

Based on Table 4.20 on technology skills, there is no significant difference between rural (M = 43.40, SD = 2.08) and urban (M = 43.63, SD = 2.12), t (839) = .06, p = .11. The mean score of urban is higher than mean score of rural on technology skills. Thus, rural and urban students do not differ in term of planning skills.

In term on resource management skills, the result shows that there is no significant difference between rural (M = 43.94, SD = 2.87), and urban (M = 43.87, SD = 1.89), t (839) = -.43, p = .54. The mean score of urban is lower than mean score of rural on self-management skills. Thus, rural and urban students do not differ in term of self-management skills.

From the analysis on entrepreneurship skills, there is no significant difference between rural (M = 43.58, SD = 2.07) and urban (M = 43.64, SD = 1.96), t (839) = 2.54, p =.66. The mean score of urban is higher than mean score of rural on entrepreneurship skills. Thus, rural and urban students do not differ in term of entrepreneurship skills.

Based on Table 4.20 on basic skills, the mean score of urban is higher than mean score of rural on basic skills. However, the t-test result suggest that there is significant difference between rural (M = 43.72, SD = 2.09) and urban (M = 43.34, SD = 2.11), t (839) = 2.54, p = .011. Thus, rural and urban students differ in terms of basic skills.

In term of leadership skills, the mean score of urban is higher than mean score of rural on leadership skills. The result show that there is a significant difference between rural (M = 43.60, SD = 2.04) and urban (M = 44.05, SD = 2.17), t (839) = -3.07, p = .00. Thus, rural and urban students differ in term of leadership skills.

From the analysis on working with others skills, the mean score of urban is lower than mean score of rural on working with others skills. There is a significant difference between rural (M = 43.39, SD = 1.97) and urban (M = 42.98, SD = 2.06), t (839) = 2.88, p = .00. Thus, rural and urban students differ in term of working with others skills.

Based on Table 4.20 on ethic skills, the mean score of urban is lower than mean score of rural on ethnic skills. There is no significance difference between rural (M = 42.33, SD = 2.74) and urban (M = 42.06, SD = 2.99), t (839) = 1.35, p = .175. Thus, rural and urban students do not differ in term of ethnic skills.

In term on technical and vocational skills, the result show that there is no significant difference between rural (M = 39.17, SD = 2.44) and urban (M = 38.87, SD = 2.93), t (661.14) = 1.55, p = .12. The mean score of rural is higher than mean score of urban. Thus, the result provides evident that rural students are more competent in technical and vocational skills compared urban students in vocational colleges.

Based on Table 4.20, in addition to the questionnaire, the differences of competency employability skills among rural and urban vocational students shows that there is no significant difference between rural (M = 648.61, SD = 9.11) and urban (M = 647.86, SD = 8.97), t (839) = 1.18, p = .23. The mean score of rural is higher than mean score of urban. Thus, the result provides evident that rural students are more competent in hospitality employability skills compared to urban students in vocational colleges.

The determinants of hospitality employability skills among bakery vocational students. Research Question 4. What are the determinants of perceived level in employability skills among bakery vocational students majoring in hospitality? This part reports the result of analysis of multiple linear regression Hospitality Employability Skills upon Independent Variables. The analysis was addressed to answer the following research questions. A multiple linear regression was calculated to predict total competence based on location, Indian, age, mother's occupation, father's occupation, Chinese, family income, CGPA and gender. Based on result analysis on total competence, the result indicates that coefficient for CGPA below 3.0 is negative and statistically significant. This shows that bakery's student who has CGPA below 3 is less likely to have the expected employability skills, holding other variables constant. The coefficient for government father's occupation is negative and statistically significant. This shows that bakery's student who has father working in governmental job are less likely to have the expected employability skills, holding others constant. The coefficient for government mother's occupation is positive and statistically significant. This shows that bakery's students who has mother working in governmental jobs are likely to have the expected employability, holding other

variables constant. While the coefficient for age below 17, male, Malay, Chinese, Indian, family income below RM 3000, rural is not significant. Tests to see if the data met the assumption of collinearity indicated that multicollinearity was not a concern (cgpa below 3.0, Tolerance = .70, VIF = 1.41; government father's occupation government father's occupation, Tolerance = .80, VIF = 1.24; government mother's occupation government mother's occupation, Tolerance = .73, VIF = 1.35).

Table 4.21
Coefficients Model for bakery student

Model		Coefficients			t	Sig	Collinearity Statistics	
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients				
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1314.17	16.42		80.02	.00		
	age below 17	6.51	4.42	.07	1.47	.14	.80	1.24
	male	-1.66	2.72	-.03	-.61	.54	.66	1.49
	Malay	-.10	5.91	-.00	-.01	.98	.19	5.15
	Chinese	2.24	6.49	.03	.34	.73	.21	4.62
	Indian	1.36	8.72	.00	.15	.87	.57	1.75
	cgpa below 3.0	-9.13	2.62	-.18	-3.48	.00	.70	1.41
	Gov father occupation	-7.34	2.50	-.14	-2.93	.00	.80	1.24
	Gov mother occupation	12.35	3.57	.17	3.45	.00	.73	1.35
	familyincomebelow 3000	-2.48	2.60	-.05	-.95	.34	.72	1.37
	Rural	-9.08	14.43	-.02	-.62	.52	.95	1.05

The determinants of hospitality employability skills among culinary vocational students. Research Question 5. What are the determinants of perceived level in employability skills among culinary vocational students majoring in hospitality? A multiple linear regression was calculated to predict total competence based on location, Indian, age, mother's occupation, father's occupation, Chinese, family income, CGPA and gender. Based on result analysis on total competence, the result shows that coefficient for male is positive and statistically significant. The result indicates that coefficient for CGPA below 3.0 is negative and statistically significant. This shows that bakery's student who has CGPA below 3 is less likely to have the expected employability skills, holding other variables constant. The coefficient for government father's occupation is negative and statistically significant. This shows that bakery's student who has father working in governmental job are less likely to have the expected employability skills, holding others constant. The coefficient for government mother's occupation is positive and statistically significant. This shows that bakery's students who has mother working in governmental jobs are likely to have the expected employability, holding other variables constant. While the coefficient for age below 17, male, Malay, Chinese, Indian, family income below 3000, rural is not significant. Tests to see if the data met the assumption of collinearity indicated that multicollinearity was not a concern (male, Tolerance = .71, VIF = 1.40; cgpa below 3.0, Tolerance = .70, VIF = 1.41; government father's occupation, Tolerance = .85, VIF = 1.17; government mother's occupation, Tolerance = .72, VIF = 1.37).

Table 4.22

Coefficients Model for culinary student

Model		Coefficients						
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1312.99	9.55		137.40	.00	.85	1.16
	age below 17	5.51	4.79	.06	1.15	.25	.71	1.40
	male	9.17	3.20	.17	2.86	.00	.20	4.86
	Malay	-12.99	7.85	-.18	-1.65	.09	.23	4.25
	Chinese	-2.93	8.72	-.03	-.33	.73	.60	1.64
	Indian	-10.24	12.99	-.05	-.78	.43	.70	1.41
	cgpa below 3.0	-8.85	3.13	-.17	-2.82	.00	.85	1.17
	Gov father occupation	-9.36	2.86	-.18	-3.26	.00	.72	1.37
	Gov mother occupation	16.15	4.33	.22	3.73	.00	.72	1.37
	familyincomebelow 3000	-3.91	3.11	-.07	-1.25	.21	.94	1.05
	Rural	1.07	9.03	.00	.11	.90		

The differences between importance and competence of employability skills among bakery students? Research Question 6. Are there any differences in competency perceived level between importance and competence of employability skills among bakery vocational students majoring in hospitality? In addition to the questionnaire, the differences of between importance and competence of employability skills among bakery students are explored. The analysis report and the discussion in this part aim to answer the research question 6.

Table 4.23
Paired-sample T-test for the means of competence and importance of employability skills (bakery)

Variables	Mean Competence	Mean Importance	T	df	Significance
communication	43.73	43.50	1.43	486	.15
teamwork	42.98	43.97	-8.18	486	.00*
problem solving	43.66	43.51	1.15	486	.24
initiative	43.89	43.99	-.66	486	.50
planning & organising	43.61	43.60	.03	486	.97
self-management	43.94	43.86	.57	486	.56
learning	43.56	43.59	-.29	486	.76
information technology	43.39	43.94	-4.45	486	.00*
resource management	43.95	43.50	5.49	486	.00*
entrepreneurship	43.57	43.51	.59	486	.55
basic	43.73	43.94	-1.74	486	.08
leadership	43.57	43.50	.63	486	.52
working with others	43.42	43.51	-.73	486	.46
ethical	42.30	43.94	-11.14	486	.00*
tech vocational	39.17	43.50	-31.69	486	.00*
TOTAL	648.54	655.44	-7.84	486	.00*

Note: *Significant at the 0.05 level

In order to validate the results of this gap analysis, a paired-sample T-test was performed between the means of importance and competence of employability skills among bakery students. As shown in Table 4.23, the biggest employability skills gap is in resource management skills and the smallest gap is in technical and vocational skills. Overall, all gaps between importance and competence on skills are statistically

significant ($p < 0.05$). This suggests that improvement efforts and corrective actions must be taken, in order to improve the overall satisfaction of these variables. These variables are teamwork skills, information technology skills, and ethical skills also technical and vocational skills.

There is significant difference between competence and importance of teamwork skills. The mean value for competent of teamwork (M= 42.98) is lower than the mean value for important (M=43.97); t (486) = - 8.818, p = .00. This result suggests that the competence of bakery students in terms of teamwork skills is lower than the importance perceived by those students.

There is significant difference between competence and importance of technology skills. The mean value for competent of technology (M=43.39) is lower than the mean value for important (M= 43.94); t (486) = - 4.45, p = .00. This result suggests that the competence of bakery students in terms of technology skills is lower than the importance perceived by those students.

There is significant difference between competence and importance of resource management skills. The mean value for competent of resource management (M=43.95) is higher than the mean value for important (M= 43.50); t (486) = 5.49, p = .00. This result suggests that the competence of bakery students in terms of resource management skills is higher than the importance perceived by those students.

There is significant difference between competence and importance of ethical and professional moral skills. The mean value for competent of ethical and professional moral (M=42.30) is lower than the mean value for important (M= 43.94); t (486) = -11.14, p = .00. This result suggests that the competence of bakery students in terms of ethical and professional moral skills is lower than the importance perceived by those students.

There is significant difference between competence and importance of technical and vocational skills. The mean value for competent of technical and vocational skills (M=39.17) is lower than the mean value for important (M= 43.50); t (486) = -31.69, p = .000. This result suggests that the competence of bakery students in terms of technical and vocational skills is lower than the importance perceived by those students.

Therefore the overall gap analysis between competence and importance of employability skill have a significant differences. The mean value for competent of employability skills (M=648.54) is lower than the mean value for important (M=655.44); t (486) = -7.84, p = .00. This result suggests that the competence of bakery students in terms of employability skills is lower than the importance perceived by those students.

The differences between importance and competence of employability skills among culinary students. Research Question 7. Are there any differences in competency perceived level between importance and competence of employability skills among culinary vocational students majoring in hospitality?

In addition to the questionnaire, the differences of between importance and competence of employability skills among bakery students are explored. The analysis report and the discussion in this part aims to answer the research question 7.

Table 4.24
Paired-sample T-test for the means of competence and importance of employability skills (culinary)

Variables	Mean Competence	Mean Importance	T	df	Significance
communication	43.46	43.68	-1.13	353	.25
teamwork	43.01	43.92	-5.55	353	.00*
problem solving	43.70	43.43	1.79	353	.07
initiative	43.84	43.88	-.26	353	.78
planning & organizing	43.85	43.62	1.66	353	.09
self-management	44.01	43.76	1.54	353	.12

learning	43.51	43.62	-.75	353	.45
information technology	43.64	43.85	-1.36	353	.17
resource management	43.86	43.41	4.65	353	.00*
entrepreneurship	43.65	43.43	2.03	353	.04*
basic	43.33	43.85	-3.76	353	.00*
leadership	44.08	43.41	4.41	353	.00*
working with others	42.95	43.43	-3.28	353	.00*
ethical	42.12	43.85	-8.26	353	.00*
tech vocational	38.88	43.41	-23.31	353	.00*
TOTAL	647.96	654.63	-5.95	353	.00*

Note: *Significant at the 0.05 level

In order to validate the results of this gap analysis, a paired-sample T-test was performed between the means of importance and competence of employability skills among culinary students. As shown in Table 4.24, the biggest employability skills gap is in resource management skills and the smallest gap is in technical and vocational skills. Overall, all gaps between importance and competence on skills are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). This suggests that improvement efforts and corrective actions must be taken, in order to improve the overall satisfaction of these variables. These variables are teamwork skills, basic skills, working with others skills, ethical skills also technical and vocational skills.

There is significant difference between competence and importance of teamwork skills. The mean value for importance of teamwork (M=43.92) is higher than the mean value for competence (M= 43.01); t (353) = -5.55, p = .00. This result suggests that the competence of culinary students in terms of teamwork skills is lower than the importance perceived by those students.

There is significant difference between competence and importance of resource management skills. The mean value for importance of resource management (M=43.41) is lower than the mean value for competence (M= 43.86); t (353) = 4.65, p

= .00. This result suggests that the competence of culinary students in terms of teamwork skills is higher than the importance perceived by those students.

There is significant difference between competence and importance of entrepreneurship skills. The mean value for importance of entrepreneurship (M=43.43) is lower than the mean value for competence (M= 43.65); t (353) = 2.03, p = .04. This result suggests that the competence of culinary students in terms of entrepreneurship skills is higher than the importance perceived by those students.

There is significant difference between competence and importance of basic skills. The mean value for importance of basic skills (M=43.85) is higher than the mean value for competence (M= 43.33); t (353) = -3.76, p = .00. This result suggests that the competence of culinary students in terms of basic skills is lower than the importance perceived by those students.

There is significant difference between competence and importance of leadership skills. The mean value for importance of leadership skills (M=43.41) is higher than the mean value for competence (M= 44.08), t (353) = 4.41, p = .00. This result suggests that the competence of culinary students in terms of leadership skills is lower than the importance perceived by those students.

There is significant difference between competence and importance of ethical and professional skills. The mean value for importance of ethical and professional skills (M=43.85) is higher than the mean value for competence (M= 42.12), t (353) = -8.26, p = .00. This result suggests that the competence of culinary students in terms of ethical and professional skills is lower than the importance perceived by those students.

There is significant difference between competence and importance of technical and vocational skills. The mean value for importance of technical and

vocational skills (M=43.41) is higher than the mean value for competence (M= 38.88); t (353) = - 23.31, p = .00. This result suggests that the competence of culinary students in terms of technical and vocational skills is lower than the importance perceived by those students.

Therefore, the overall gap analysis between competence and importance of employability skill have significant differences. The mean value for importance of employability skills (M=654.63) is higher than the mean value for competence (M=647.96); t (353) = -5.95, p = .00. This result suggests that the competence of culinary students in terms of employability skills is lower than the importance perceived by those students.

Qualitative Analysis of Focus Group Discussion

This section reports and discusses the result of secondary data analysis in terms of qualitative analysis upon transcription of focus group discussion. This report aims to support the findings of research question 8. Qualitative research was conducted by structured interview to the students. Ten students participated in focus group discussion at the vocational college. Focus group discussion was carried out in English and Malay language as requested by the students and also to provide a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere for the interview session. However, during the process of transcription, reinterpretation and data analysis, all students were reported and interpreted into English. The research instrument was a structured interview guidelines with the themes, namely: Purpose/skills, Assessment, and Skills expected to gain more and employment. The time for the interview was determined based on the agreements between respondents and researchers and the interview started with brief explanation of the research and the signing of the consent form. Results of the interview were converted into a transcript immediately after the interview and prior to the next

interview. Transcripts were analyzed with open coding by researcher. The transcribed quotations are as close to participants words as possible. As spoken words in conversation spontaneous are not always grammatically correct, the grammatical errors within quotation are only slightly edited to represent the actual conversation with no intention of misrepresentation of the participant's communication and language skills. Some quotations have be arranged to remove unnecessary words between the conversations only to display the relevant parts of the quotation.

Validity and Reliability. The concept of validity is described by a wide range of terms in qualitative studies. This concept is not a single, fixed or universal concept, but rather a contingent construct, inescapably grounded in the processes and intentions of particular research methodologies and projects (Winter, 2000). Although some qualitative researchers have argued that the term validity is not applicable to qualitative research, but at the same time, they have realized the need for some kind of qualifying check or measure for their research. For example, Creswell and Miller (2000) suggest that the validity is affected by the researcher's perception of validity in the study and her choice of paradigm assumption. As a result, many researchers have developed their own concepts of validity and have often generated or adopted what they consider to be more appropriate terms, such as, quality, rigor and trustworthiness. On the other hand, Patton (2002) states that validity and reliability are two factors which any qualitative researcher should be concerned about while designing a study, analyzing results and judging the quality of the study. Patton (2002) with regards to the researcher's ability and skill in any qualitative research also states that reliability is a consequence of the validity in a study. For the aim of validity and reliability, the result of qualitative analysis was also assessed by hospitality professor in technical university, lecturer in private colleges and also industrial management in order to gain more validity. The

analysis and interpretation was aimed to support the main findings of quantitative data in the previous section.

Qualitative Findings of Employability skills. The features of qualitative data collection techniques are adapted from a protocol interview in a research on key skills set by Jelas et al. (2006) and core competencies set by Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, QCA (2000). The aim of qualitative data collection is to have a discussion on experiences of students and perceptions on the course that are following. Due to ethical considerations the identity of the participants are not mentioned in the study. Participants are identified with numbers and only the required parts of the conversation have been transcribed and quoted. The common characteristics of the participants have been discussed earlier. The main themes was raised in a focused group discussion are; Purpose/skills, Assessment, and Skills expected to gain more and employment.

***Theme: Purpose/skills*.** In the interviews, students used several phrases to define employability skills, including soft skills, people skills, transferable skills, work skills, core skills, and generic skills. During focus group discussion, the two expressions were addressed about the course.

> *"I think in this course the most important part is about skills that we have learn during our class. We love hands on class compared to theory class."(R10; 11072016; 10)*

It also supported by R4,

> "*Not only the knowledge of the course but the skills also important for us. For example communication skills, management skill and so on."(R4; 11072016; 13)*

During focus group discussion, the two expressions were addressed to structure of the course.

> *"The structure of our programs follows clear educational aims that are tailored to each program. We enjoyed it to learn every day." (R5; 11072016; 16)*

"Yes, that true. These are all outlined in the program specification documents which include further details such as the learning outcome. The lecturers always explained to us how important our course for our future."(R7; 11072016; 19)

Based on the interview session the students also addressed about the skills that they gained during the class. The first issue is about the communication skills. This might be one reason why participants did not feel any need for English language skills in this aspect. Participants agreed that they did not need English language skills to attain this aspect of employability as Malay language was used.

"The study was in Malay language, so I did not need English. Even though we have presentation, we explained it in Malay language."(R2; 11072016; 20)

One of the students mentioned about communication skills, one of the statements was;

"*We are given assignment to present in classroom. The presentation have been done in our language which is Malays language. So it easier for us to understand compared in English language."(R3; 11072016; 21)*

One student's statement quoted as follow;

"Communication, teamwork and how we manage our emotional and then our time management, because when we get to work with others we have to manage the time." (R2; 11072016; 23)

And there were three expressions also related to entrepreneurship skills, such as;

"All of us compulsory to do small event related to business such as open booth during school sport day." (R8; 11072016; 25)

Students of vocational colleges indicated that technical and vocational skills were encouraged but not in all subjects. There were two statements referred to technical and vocational skills, such as;

"In doing assignment especially in practical class we explore and learn the skills that are related to the hospitality industry for example cooking skills, presentation of foods, and table etiquette."(R10; 11072016; 27)

In term of problem solving skills, student addressed four statement related to it. One of the statements was

> "S*ome lecturers tried to correlate between theory and actual situation. But sometimes it is hard for me to understand what he wants to explain to us." (R10; 11072016; 28)*

However during the session of focus group discussion, no statement was given which refer to numeracy competencies and learning how to learn skills. Students also addressed *(*negative statements related to employability skills. One of the negative statement related to IT usage was;

> *"We don't learn using IT in any subject. We only know by our own how to use the Microsoft Word and so on."(R3; 11072016; 30)*

And also negative statements related to technical and vocational skills, such as a students' statement;

> "*We don't know what for we learn, when we go to work we just learn from the books'. We need to update ourselves, like we apply one method today but surely we can't apply same method tomorrow so we need to update and see changes for another method for tomorrow."(R10; 11072016; 31)*

Two statements from students refer to working with others. The student also mentioned slightly about the practices of numeracy skills during focus group discussions. One student's statement is quoted as follows;

> "C*ommunication, teamwork and how to manage our emotional and our time management, because when we get to work with others or industry we have to manage the time and will serve our customer perfectly."(R7; 11072016; 33)*

Students also mentioned that the problem solving competencies was developed in some subjects, one of the statements was;

> "*When they give us a class, we have to use the practical, we have to do research and we have to go for survey."(R9; 11072016; 34)*

Theme: Assessment. Students nominated assessment as another mechanism currently being used to facilitate the development of more employability skills. Students were seen to have a very pragmatic view about skills development. If it is

assessed, then it must be important. Most students felt that employability skills had to be assessed to demonstrate to them that it was important. As one student in a focus group described it, was for a teacher to say that the generic skill was not only being assessed, but was also a skill that would earn those who possessed it more money than those who did not.

> *"My teachers said this skills not only to be learn but in future it will help us to get more income in our life. The first and most important thing is you should know the field of the job you are looking for." (R4; 11072016; 35)*

In terms of the purpose of assessment, the students believed that students understood how the assessment was being used to test whether they had achieved competence in employability skill.

In the focus groups discussion, students talked about the need to put skills development and assessment within a work context. They wanted to be motivated to learn skills for a specific job or industry. On the other hand, they did not feel that their teachers spent much time explaining how, as one business student put it, in life skills will help me if I decide to change jobs and positions. Students also wanted more time to reflect upon work-based experiences. Some reported that there was little use of reflective processes in which they could report on the experiences of working, for instance, with others as part of a team, or on their experiences and learning in solving a problem.

Response of students in terms of assessment method indicated that vocational students emphasized more on practical class system. Their faculty has included employability skills in the system of assessment. Vocational students stated that

"*Vocational college focused more on practical class examination."*

One of the statements addressed by students was

"Was almost all subjects were more practical examination."

When replying interviewer's question related to their satisfaction of the assessment system, the students in the focus group discussion revealed that they were very happy with the examination systems. The vocational students expressed as follow;

"For me, no need to focus on theoretical to exam."

It also supported by other students.

"We are very happy because no need to stay up very night to study the theory but we study for the practical examination".

While one of the student addressed that the examination were evaluated in short time.

'*We no need to memories all the subjects because practical examination is very useful for us'. 'We feel very fair with these methods, because not all can be evaluated by examination'.*

The vocational student also indicated statements in their process of teaching and learning. One of the statements is;

'
"We do not just get the knowledge but we also get life skills for example the interpersonal skills, communication skills and self-management skills and we believe that we can apply it in the near future and also we believe that those skills will be very useful."

Theme: Skills expected to gain more and employment. Interview was carried out to find several employability skills needed in job market. Representatives from bakery and culinary background were chosen as respondent. On the whole, they have the same opinion of the essential of employability skills. From first representative (R1), she agreed that employability skills are important like academic achievement and had been a crucial requirement to entering in a job market:

"*Diploma is just a starting point, as a passport for you to get employed but generic skill is a supporting towards for you to be in the organization and to*

survive in organization in interview structure, we don't look at the (academic) qualification but what we will consider is the skills and quality of the graduates." (R1; 11072016; 36)

Among the most frequently mentioned by both groups of students related to their expectation were vocational colleges should be more focused to develop students' capability to work in future, for example; students expressed that:

"We expect, we can apply our knowledge for working. Other things like presentation skills and like how well our English language is also very important."(R2; 11072016; 37)

While a student also expressed such as this statement;

"*I expect after graduates from this vocational college, I become a professional and working at a big company." (R3; 11072016; 38)*

These expressions mean that the student expected to acquire professional skills (employability skills) during their study at university.

The respondent also expected several skills to gain during their studies. One of the respondents said,

"For me, for example we cannot communicate properly especially during some undergo presentation. Therefore we need to develop skills continuously." (R5; 11072016; 38)

For that purpose, the way of how the skills are gained is via communication to approach the information, technology, administration and management, in globalize condition. One of respondents mentioned that,

"I had a good result in English Language in Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR) but I did not perform well when asked to do a presentation." (R6; 11072016;39)

To identify the generic skills that are required by employees, the interviewee was asked to list the vital generic skills which are needed in selecting process for employment.

R7 clarified the communication skills, interpersonal skills and self-confidence are skills that are needed in industry and it should be complimented to any technical skills: Similar with R8, R9 also adds the sensible to manipulate the self-potential as fundamental skills for new workers to assimilate themselves into uncertain situation of jobs market:

> *"Communication perspective is important. But sometimes we good during communicate with others rather than doing well in our jobs. As instance, we have a bashful friend before. He can't elaborate information briefly. After seven months being trained by our teachers then he change and can perform jobs with confidence." (R7; 11072016; 40)*
> *"But for me, the most important factor is ourselves. If we want to go more, we must do something more." (R8; 11072016; 41)*
> *"Yes, surely I agreed with them about employability skills is very important for our future." (R9; 11072016; 42)*

During the interview, all representative also agreed that the employability skills are very important for students to suite themselves in the workplace.

Summary

In the previous chapter (chapter 3) explains the research methodology of the study. It outlines research design, sampling method, research instruments, reliability and validity also data procedures in details. Prior to full implementation of the survey, a pilot study is carried out to test the validity of content and construction of the instrument. The study uses survey method to collect data for the quantitative approach. The quantitative data is analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 for Windows. The interview is needed to support the findings. The features of qualitative data collection is a set of interview protocol. The next chapter reported the data analysis of the study. Using a mixed method approach enables both methods findings to corroborate each other, in theory. This is in line with the ideas of triangulation and the methodological approach that qualitative and quantitative methods can be successfully mixed. The findings of the quantitative

research and qualitative research are presented in this chapter (Chapter Four). This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section discusses the sample profile and presents frequencies and percentage distribution of the respondents' profiles. The next section looks and discusses the findings of descriptive analysis. The final section discusses the result of inferential analysis. The next chapter (Chapter 5) discusses the finding of the study to depict an overview of what was discovered from the data collection findings. The finding were reviewed according to the research questions that had been set out earlier in the study. And some references of other findings were also included to support the discussions.

Chapter 5 Discussion, Implications and Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter presents the introduction. The employability skills in hospitality were divided into fifteen sub-skills, which were Communication Skills, Teamwork Skills, Problem-solving Skills, Initiative and enterprise Skills, Planning and Organizing Skills, Self-management Skills, Resource Management Skills, Technology Skills, Entrepreneurship Skills, Leadership Skills, Basic skills, Learning how to learn, Working with others, Ethical and Professional Moral also Technical and Vocational skills. These skills are essential to ensure that students are fully prepared to successfully face the challenges of the working world that is becoming more complex.

The data collection is based on student's questionnaire and focus group interviews. This study analyses the level of hospitality employability skills among vocational students, the differences in level by gender of vocational students, the differences of hospitality employability skills among rural and urban vocational students, also analyses the determinant of hospitality employability skills among bakery vocational students, the determinant of hospitality employability skills among culinary vocational students, the differences between importance and competence of employability skills among bakery students, the differences between importance and competence of employability skills among culinary students, identify the employability skills among hospitality students, and to analyze the skills that are needed by students for entering the hospitality profession. In addition to quantitative analysis, qualitative interview also conducted to find out the insights of the employability skills from the students. Thus in this chapter, discussions, implications and recommendation based on the findings of the study were discussed.

Summary of Findings

In order to summarize the findings of the study, the research explained it in detailed as follows. The study was conducted into two research methods. First is quantitative research method. In this part the researcher asked the students to complete the questionnaire. The findings revealed that in overall the level of hospitality employability skills among vocational students in Malaysia were at high level of competence and importance (93.2%). This is showed that the students were competent on the employability skills. In short, this study found that the differences of competency employability skills among male and female vocational students shows that the differences of competency employability skills among male and female vocational students show that there is no significant difference between male (M = 649.06, SD = 8.49) and female (M = 647.77, SD = 9.40), t (788.14) = 2.07, p = 0.39. The mean score of male is higher than mean score of female. Thus, the result provides evident that male are more competent in hospitality employability skills compared to female students in vocational colleges. The findings of this study showed that in term of competency employability skills among rural and urban vocational students there are no significant difference between rural (M = 648.61, SD = 9.11) and urban (M = 647.86, SD = 8.97), t (839) = 1.18, p = .23.. However, previous study done by Osman et al., (2006), but this study used teachers as their sampling. The study reported that data on school location reveals that teachers in the rural areas (41.8%) require great assistance in this aspect as opposed to teachers in urban areas (35.4%). A multiple regression was calculated to predict total competence based on location, Indian, age, mother's occupation, father's occupation, Chinese, family income, CGPA and gender. Based on result analysis on total competence, the result indicates that coefficient for CGPA below 3.0 is negative and statistically significant. This shows that bakery's

student who has CGPA below 3 is less likely to have the expected employability skills, holding other variables constant. The coefficient for government father's occupation is negative and statistically significant. This shows that bakery's student who has father working in governmental job is less likely to have the expected employability skills, holding others constant. The coefficient for government mother's occupation is positive and statistically significant. This shows that bakery's students who has mother working in governmental jobs are likely to have the expected employability, holding other variables constant. While the coefficient for age below 17, male, Malay, Chinese, Indian, family income below RM 3000, rural is not significant. In this study, the result shows that the overall gap analysis between competence and importance of employability skill have significant differences. The mean value for competent of employability skills (M=648.54) is lower than the mean value for important (M=655.44); t (486) = -7.84, p = .00. The biggest employability skills gap is in resource management skills and the smallest gap is in technical and vocational skills. This result suggests that the competence of bakery students in terms of employability skills is lower than the importance perceived by those students. In this study, the overall gap analysis between competence and importance of employability skill has significant differences. The mean value for importance of employability skills (M=654.63) is higher than the mean value for competence (M=647.96). The biggest employability skills gap is in resource management skills and the smallest gap is in technical and vocational skills. This result suggests that the competence of culinary students in terms of employability skills is lower than the importance perceived by those students. Overall, the findings of competence among bakery indicate that the competence gained is lower in terms of teamwork, information technology skills, ethical, technical and vocational skills for bakery students. In terms of culinary, the findings of competence

shows that teamwork, working with others, ethical, technical and vocational skills gained by students is lower than the importance perceived by them. Interview was carried out to find several employability skills needed in job market. Representatives from bakery and culinary background were chosen as respondent. On the whole, they have the same opinion of the essential of employability skills. The students agreed that employability skills are important like academic achievement and had been a crucial requirement to entering in a job market. Among the most frequently mentioned by both groups of students related to their expectation were vocational colleges should be more focused to develop students' capability to work in future. In conclusion during the interview, all representative also agreed that the employability skills are very important for students to suite themselves in the workplace. The findings revealed students of vocational colleges need their colleges to encourage their communication, IT, numeracy, problem solving, working with others, specific subject content competencies and overall competencies. And it is expected that the students will be able to read and analyze working situation with a critical mind and use their core competencies to succeed their career and their employer as well as contribute their country. Particularly, due to the lacking of communication practice by the students in the process of teaching and learning, the vocational colleges ought to encourage lecturer to convey learning activities which aims to improve students' communication competencies. It is essential that core competencies can be assessed as an integral part of the subject. By this manner, the students and employer expectation can be achieved.

Discussion of the Findings

This section summarises and discusses the finding of the study to depict an overview of what was discovered from the data collection findings. The finding were

reviewed according to the research questions that had been set out earlier in the study. And some references of other findings were also included to support the discussions.

Research Question 1: What are the perceived level of competency on a let of identified employment skills among vocational students majoring in hospitality?

In part II of the questionnaire, students were asked to rate their level of competency (High level of competence - extensive experience in the skill area, Moderately high level of competence - good experience in the skill area, Average level of competence – some experience in the skill area, Low level of competence – little experience in the skill area, No level of competence – no experience in the skill area) and level of importance (Not very important, Not important, Neutral, Important, Very Important) in five categories. The findings revealed that in overall the level of hospitality employability skills among vocational students in Malaysia were at high level of competence and importance (93.2%). This is showed that the students were competent on the employability skills. However, a study by Rahman et al. (2010) revealed that biology pre-services teacher's numeracy, critical thinking and problem skills at a low level. Samsudin and Rusnayati (2010) found that physics pre-service teachers' generic skills in terms of numeracy are at high level. The findings show that the employability skills of vocational secondary school students are moderately high (M = 3.81, SD = 0.34). A study by Rohana (2010) using 393 vocational agriculture students also showed that students' employability skills were moderate, but the scores were lower (Mean 3.62, SD. = 0.43) than the current score. A study by Omar, Bakar, and Rashid (2012) using community college students also confirmed the moderate findings in their sample (Mean = 3.63, SD. = 0.47). Based on these studies, we can say that employability skills of Malaysian vocational and technical students were moderate to moderately high.

Research Question 2: Are there any differences in competency perceived level by gender for vocational students majoring in hospitality? In short, this study found that the differences of competency employability skills among male and female vocational students shows that the differences of competency employability skills among male and female vocational students show that there is no significant difference between male (M = 649.06, SD = 8.49) and female (M = 647.77, SD = 9.40), t (788.14) = 2.07, p = 0.39. The mean score of male is higher than mean score of female. Thus, the result provides evident that male are more competent in hospitality employability skills compared to female students in vocational colleges. However, the study carried out by Al-Alawneh (2014), stated that it can be inferred, that females' students scored higher than males' students in the two groups which may indicate that female students as more serious, disciplined, and achieve higher grades than males students. Employability skills can assists students to learn how to learn. As males and females develop, they rely less on the authority of grades and adults' evaluations as sources of feedback on their performance. Rather, employability skills is foundational to the development of intrinsic motivation and autonomous learning. 1t is interesting to note that (by comparison with others) males and females of high ability tended to underestimate their own performances while students of lesser ability tend to overestimate their performances. In addition, males and females producing good work were more self-critical than they were judgmental, whereas students producing poor work were less critical but more judgmental. In this regard, it is important that students know what they are attempting before they commence the task. Further, the student needs to know the standards of performance, know what he or she is trying to achieve, and be able to compare his or her own performance to that standard.

Research Question 3: Are there any differences in competency perceived level between rural and urban vocational students majoring in hospitality? Some findings emerged from this study. One important result was that while there are some distinct differences in values between students from different backgrounds at the start of their tertiary study, these differences are not sustained over time. At the point of entry, the type of secondary school attended and whether they were raised in the country or a city has an impact on the values held. The result shows that students from the town and city upbringing clearly identify themselves of having a clearer idea and more knowledgeable about the programed and industry at the time of making their choice than those from a rural area. Similarly, students from vocational secondary schools backgrounds classify themselves as better informed, having more realistic in perceptions and views about the industry. These outcomes, in fact, support the notion that the urban environment provides a better stimulus for students for higher education, easy access to information about wider career opportunities and early career guidance applied in education process gives better awareness about the career options (Dhesi, 2000). The availability of such information is likely to motivate them to increase the effort of taking hospitality program. Conversely, results also provide strong evidence that there is some level of innocence, less understanding of what is important about the value of work; have a lower level of certainty of future careers at the time of entry to their study program among students from the rural area and normal secondary schools. As indicated in this study vast majority of students from rural and normal school backgrounds seem to enroll on the hospitality program with insufficient information and unrealistic about careers and employment in the hospitality industry. Therefore, for these students to have at least realistic or positive perceptions of the industry, there are three issues that must be addressed.

First of all, career guidance and orientation should be made more efficient especially at the normal secondary schools. If a student were informed realistically and sufficiently about careers and working conditions in the hospitality industry at the early stage, they will form more realistic and lower expectations with regards to a job in the industry and choose to study hospitality based their career decision on choice rather than by chance.

It is suggested that there is a need to educate parents in the rural areas as to the profound effects their attitudes have on their children's career aspirations. Parents are normally found to play a strategic part in the process of young adult's career choices (Dhesi, 2001). Consequently, it may be necessary for recruiters in hospitality institutions, along with government representatives (Ministry of Education) and school counselors, to shoulder some responsibility to inform parents more fully. This will ensure that parents understand more thoroughly the types of career potential in the hospitality industry. This could be done through forums, career workshops, seminars or similar means. Such activities will enable parents to develop more positive views of hospitality and pass this to their children. This also applies to teachers whose attitudes and opinions significantly influence post–school career plans. If the teachers do not adequately understand and convey an accurate picture of the nature and demands of the industry, then students may develop false impressions that could lead to personal dissonance upon graduation and assimilation into the industry.

Finally, vocational education should be promoted among the rural youth. As is anecdotally evident, vocational education is believed to be the most preferred option among the least academic achievers and particularly among the rural area students. If the government is serious about ensuring that prospective future hospitality students possess realistic perceptions and are better prepared for a hospitality career, then more

vocational secondary schools which offer courses related to hospitality should be opened. This is especially important in the rural area. Early career guidance and nurturing of hospitality career interest could better equip secondary students to make more informed career choices. This will further ensure students can be more definite and realistic about what they expect from their study and future career. As a result, they would be less disappointed when they commence study in hospitality programs and later enter the industry. Together these can reduce future industry attrition.

The findings of this study showed that in term of competency employability skills among rural and urban vocational students there are no significant difference between rural (M = 648.61, SD = 9.11) and urban (M = 647.86, SD = 8.97), t (839) = 1.18, p = .23.. However, previous study done by Osman et al., (2006), but this study used teachers as their sampling. The study reported that data on school location reveals that teachers in the rural areas (41.8%) require great assistance in this aspect as opposed to teachers in urban areas (35.4%).

Research Question 4: What are the determinants of perceived level in employability skills among bakery vocational students majoring in hospitality? A multiple regression was calculated to predict total competence based on location, Indian, age, mother's occupation, father's occupation, Chinese, family income, CGPA and gender. Based on result analysis on total competence, the result indicates that coefficient for CGPA below 3.0 is negative and statistically significant. This shows that bakery's student who has CGPA below 3 is less likely to have the expected employability skills, holding other variables constant. The coefficient for government father's occupation is negative and statistically significant. This shows that bakery's student who has father working in governmental job is less likely to have the expected employability skills, holding others constant. The coefficient for government mother's

occupation is positive and statistically significant. This shows that bakery's students who has mother working in governmental jobs are likely to have the expected employability, holding other variables constant. While the coefficient for age below 17, male, Malay, Chinese, Indian, family income below RM 3000, rural is not significant.

Research Question 5: What are the determinants of perceived level in employability skills among culinary vocational students majoring in hospitality? A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to identify factors such as location, Indian, age, mother's occupation, father's occupation, Chinese, family income, CGPA and gender. A multiple linear regression was calculated to predict total competence based on location, Indian, age, mother's occupation, father's occupation, Chinese, family income, CGPA and gender. Based on result analysis on total competence, the result shows that coefficient for male is positive and statistically significant. The result indicates that coefficient for CGPA below 3.0 is negative and statistically significant. This shows that bakery's student who has CGPA below 3 is less likely to have the expected employability skills, holding other variables constant. The coefficient for government father's occupation is negative and statistically significant. This shows that bakery's student who has father working in governmental job is less likely to have the expected employability skills, holding others constant. The coefficient for government mother's occupation is positive and statistically significant. This shows that bakery's students who has mother working in governmental jobs are likely to have the expected employability, holding other variables constant. While the coefficient for age below 17, male, Malay, Chinese, Indian, family income below RM 3000, rural is not significant.

Research Question 6: Are there any differences in competency perceived level between importance and competence of employability skills among bakery vocational students majoring in hospitality? In this study, the result shows that the overall gap analysis between competence and importance of employability skill have significant differences. The mean value for competent of employability skills (M=648.54) is lower than the mean value for important (M=655.44); t (486) = -7.84, p = .00. The biggest employability skills gap is in resource management skills and the smallest gap is in technical and vocational skills. This result suggests that the competence of bakery students in terms of employability skills is lower than the importance perceived by those students. A study done by Harris (2013) mentioned that students had higher perceptions of skill importance than they did for skill possession. This suggests that although students recognize the importance of the given skills, they may not be receiving adequate instruction or course demands to equate to proper possession of the skill or levels of comfort in performing the skill. For career technical students, none of the skills yielded a statistically significant difference. This suggests that career technical students equate their competence and possession with the level of perceived importance.

For example, according to Radhakrishna and Bruenings (1994) study, 40 employees and 67 students rated the level of importance and ability to perform skills on the job differently. Both groups rated interpersonal, communication, and business/economic skills as important. However, students rated computer and business skills as important and employees rated them as moderately important. In the ability to perform the skills on the job both groups were highly able to perform interpersonal skills. However, students were moderately able to perform communication, computer,

and business skills, and somewhat able to perform technical skills. Employees were moderately able to perform communication, technical, computer, and business skills.

Furthermore, in a study of 141 students and 75 employers conducted by Robinson and Vaughn (2007), students rated 15 of the 16 employability skill constructs higher on importance than their perceived competence level to perform them. Employers rated 13 of the 16 employability skill constructs higher on importance than their perception of the students' ability to perform them. Students and employees greatly differed on the importance and competence of employability skills. Employers desire new hires with strong foundational skills to commit to learning on the job. Skills such as teamwork, cooperation, problem-solving and interpersonal skills are being identified by employers as essential for successful employment in the new economy. The 21st century workplace is a world of fast pace communication and information technology that require teams of employees to deal with economic and technical issues to solve complex problems facing every economic system. In this study, employers placed greater emphasis on the importance of teamwork and communication than employees or students did

Research Question 7: Are there any differences in competency perceived level between importance and competence of employability skills among culinary vocational students majoring in hospitality? In this study, the overall gap analysis between competence and importance of employability skill has significant differences. The mean value for importance of employability skills (M=654.63) is higher than the mean value for competence (M=647.96). The biggest employability skills gap is in resource management skills and the smallest gap is in technical and vocational skills. This result suggests that the competence of culinary students in terms of employability skills is lower than the importance perceived by those students. A study done by Price

(2014) reported that employers believe new employees will commit to professional development if they are strongly competent in interpersonal skills. Students believe new employees will commit to professional development if they are strongly competent in information technology skills. It can be concluded that for employees there was no association among the five employability skills and new employees' commitment to continuous professional development.

A study conducted by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the University of Phoenix (2011) stated that five hundred members of the American workforce were surveyed to name the most important skills new hires should possess. A group of five behavioral competencies, from among a set of ten, were named by at least 69 percent of workers as very important to companies when it comes to hiring new employees. They listed the ability and willingness to learn new skills, critical thinking and problem-solving at the top of the list of ten skills reviewed. Collaboration/teamwork, interpersonal communication, and the ability to analyze and synthesize information were also rated as very important skills new hires should possess. Information technology was rated as somewhat important for new hires to possess.

However, in a study conducted by Klein (1990), employees rated the ability to be a team player, problem solving, and ability to express ideas clearly as skills needed in the workplace. Contrary to what Klein (1990) indicated, this study revealed employees rated the five dimensions of communication, teamwork, information technology, problem solving, and interpersonal skills as strongly important and somewhat strongly competent indicating that they believed competence was less than the level of importance among new employees skills.

Research Question 8: What are the skills that are perceived by students for entering the hospitality profession? In the interviews, students used several phrases to

define employability skills, including soft skills, people skills, transferable skills, work skills, core skills, and generic skills. During focus group discussion, the two expressions were addressed about the course. As student also mentioned that they love hands on class compared to theory class because it can enhance their skills such as communication skills, management skill and so on.

In term of the structure of the programs and it follows clear educational aims and tailored to each program. Based on the interview session the students also addressed about the skills that they gained during the class. There are communication, teamwork and time management skills. However, the students also indicated that technical and vocational skills were encouraged in some subject like in practical class the skills that are related to the hospitality industry for example cooking skills, presentation of foods, and table etiquette.

However during the session of focus group discussion, no statement was given which refer to numeracy competencies and learning how to learn skills.

Students nominated assessment as another mechanism currently being used to facilitate the development of more employability skills. Students were seen to have a very pragmatic view about skills development. If it is assessed, then it must be important. Most students felt that employability skills had to be assessed to demonstrate to them that it was important. As one student in a focus group described it, was for a teacher to say that the generic skill was not only being assessed, but was also a skill that would earn those who possessed it more money than those who did not.

In terms of the purpose of assessment, the students believed that students understood how the assessment was being used to test whether they had achieved competence in employability skill. In the focus groups discussion, students talked

about the need to put skills development and assessment within a work context. They wanted to be motivated to learn skills for a specific job or industry. On the other hand, they did not feel that their teachers spent much time explaining how, as one business student put it, in life skills will help me if decide to change jobs and positions. Students also wanted more time to reflect upon work-based experiences. Some reported that there was little use of reflective processes in which they could report on the experiences of working, for instance, with others as part of a team, or on their experiences and learning in solving a problem.

Interview was carried out to find several employability skills needed in job market. Representatives from bakery and culinary background were chosen as respondent. On the whole, they have the same opinion of the essential of employability skills. The students agreed that employability skills are important like academic achievement and had been a crucial requirement to entering in a job market. Among the most frequently mentioned by both groups of students related to their expectation were vocational colleges should be more focused to develop students' capability to work in future. In conclusion during the interview, all representative also agreed that the employability skills are very important for students to suite themselves in the workplace.

In previous study done by Alhelalat (2015) in the study of Hospitality and Non-Hospitality Graduate Skills Between Education And Industry results show that the majority of executives see that hospitality graduates perform a group of skills more than their non-hospitality graduate pears. These skills are communication skills (78%), teamwork (73%), information search and situation analysis (74%), critical thinking (68%), operation (68%), time management (59%), initiative and innovation (59 per cent), organizing (54%), self-development and management (54%), and knowledge

demonstration, increase and application (54%). These results indicate that the above mentioned skills are taught in a satisfactory manner in the hospitality education institutes and graduates use them effectively at work. The difference between hospitality graduates and non-hospitality graduates is salient here; hence, there is a clear effort by hospitality educators regarding placing these skills in the minds of graduates and growing them in their personality. Previous study done by (Weligamage, 2006) stated that employers reported work related experience as an important consideration in recruitment. Non-technical skills sought include, presenting technical findings to a diverse audience and teamwork, while personality, self-confidence and attitudes towards work are considered as preferred attributes.

As most employers move toward a more global workforce, having the right people with valuable collaborative skills becomes more important. Results of this study reveal problem-solving, teamwork, interpersonal, information technology, and communication skills were needed for new hires to succeed in the 21st century. Employers looked for these skills in potential employees because these skills were considered essential for commitment to professional development and job performance. According to the study conducted by Heimler (2010), critical thinking, interpersonal, information and technology skills are needed to succeed in the workplace in addition to basic literacy and numeracy, management, leadership, and systems thinking/work ethic. Employers want people who can put these skills to work. They want people who are creative and responsible problem solvers. If employers incorporate these skills as part of professional development training, they will have a skilled workforce for the global economy.

The industry employers' view of the skills, related to interpersonal skills should have more importance than any skills. On the other hand, students who are getting

prepared for the industry assessed the latter as low paid, repetitive with long working hours. Upon considering these points and feedback, we see that both parties are right. The perspectives of both might be seen as they are both right. However the success could not be achieved unless both the employers and the students know what to expect. Accordingly, they would also know what to face and deal clearly with the situation that would lead them to a consistency. A consistency in acknowledging the career steps on the way. Those steps would involve the students in managing and controlling the skilled employees who meet the needs of the employers and organization of the industry. Therefore, the curriculum for the tourism and hospitality industry should be consistent with the expectations of both sides and success can only be achieved if both match each other so that they both complete each other. The gap between the expectations of both has crucial importance. The bigger the gap gets, the more unlikely they succeed.

Another point is that the difference among different stakeholders' perceptions on the needs of the industry (Erdem, Cho & Johanson, 2006). For example; the researcher has discussed the difference between the employers as industry professionals' perceptions and the students' perceptions so far. However, the perceptions of educators should be added to this discussion since they shape the curriculum of the tourism and hospitality education; their perceptions become consistent with each other as a whole, and the tourism and hospitality education can be shaped both to meet the changing needs of the industry and the employers in the industry as a whole. At this point, collaboration is inevitable between all stakeholders for a greater success.

However, there should be another concern regarding the graduates of the tourism and hospitality. The focus can be put on what skills are necessary for a

successful career which can be done through surveying the faculty of hospitality, industry, and students' perceptions (Annaraud, 2006). For instance, Barron et al. (2007) 32 identified the themes of long, unsociable hours, low pay, low status and high staff turnover that appear common in the industry. All these points can demotivate graduates. Furthermore, Littlejohn and Watson (2004) stated that the hospitality sector suffered from a poor image. The industry offered long working hours, low pay, comprised repetitive work. People usually did not understand the job variety and career opportunities of the industry, although a career in tourism is generally considered interesting and challenging.

Ernawati (2003) stated that the focus of the managers of the industry was the curriculum that emphasizes the fulfilment of the needs of the industry and the importance of the availability of future employment. Scotland (2006) also stated that previous research consistently found out those managers' perceptions of the curriculum of the tourism and hospitality education as too theoretical. Instead, the importance of technical skills and practical courses should be highlighted by any curricula for the tourism and hospitality education. Finally, not only the perceptions of managers' and students' perspectives are to be concerned but also the educators' perspectives should be stated.

In Radhakrishna and Bruenings (1994) study, 40 employees and 67 students rated the level of importance and ability to perform skills on the job differently. Both groups rated interpersonal, communication, and business/economic skills as important. However, students rated computer and business skills as important and employees rated them as moderately important. In the ability to perform skills on the job, both groups rated interpersonal skills highly. However, students were moderately able to perform communication, computer, and business skills, and somewhat able to perform

technical skills. Employees were moderately able to perform communication, technical, computer, and business skills. A survey conducted by Koc (2010), students were presented with a list of 19 skills employers seek in new hires. Students perceived teamwork, work ethic, and friendly/outgoing as the top three skill desired by employers. They listed analytical and technical skills at the bottom as the least desired skills. The students' rating of the remaining 13 skills were significantly different that the employers' ratings of importance. This illustrates a gap in expectations between students and employers. Students' perception of employability skills differ from the skills desired by employers. Students rated the importance of communication, analytical, technical, and computer skills lower than the importance that employers assigned to these skills. Employers struggle to attract, retain and promote a skilled workforce. At all levels, employers have difficulty attracting workers with critical thinking, communication and computer skills as well as a strong work ethic. While turnover rates are problematic and many current and future labor shortages were identified, few leaders in human resources departments are addressing these challenges with long-term solutions.

Implication of the Study

The discussions of findings above portray The Self-Assessment of Hospitality Employment Skills among Vocational Students in Malaysia. These findings are mostly applicable to all hospitality students in vocational colleges related to hospitality employability skills. In addition, the finding is also relevant as references for further studies in areas of human resources development, adult education and professional development. The skills and general experiences gained by students working in industry-based positions while completing their degrees have the potential to significantly influence students when they begin interviewing for entry-level

management positions following graduation, their job advancement expectations, and perceptions of career plans. However, if early industry experiences are not positive or beneficial, they may have a negative effect. Industry and academic stakeholders each have a significant role to play in the advancement of students into successful entry-level managers who, based on their experiences, choose to remain in the hospitality industry throughout their employment career, becoming the next positive contributors to the success of a new generation of students.

Methodological Implication. The present study provides a few methodological contributions, in terms of adding to the body of literature, the significance of this study involves the newly developed employability skills in Malaysia. This study looks at the gap analysis in terms of importance and competence of employability skills among bakery students by using t-test. This analysis uses regression analysis to determine the determinants of employability skills. This methodology can be used by the researchers in other developing countries to analyse the determinants of expenditures.

Secondly, the researcher decided to use fifteen employability skills which are Communication Skills, Teamwork Skills, Problem-solving Skills, Initiative and enterprise Skills, Planning and organizing Skills, Self-management Skills, Resource Management Skills, Technology Skills, Entrepreneurship Skills, Leadership Skills, Basic skills, Learning how to learn, Working with others, Ethical & professional moral and Technical & vocational skills compared to previous study. This is the first study in Malaysia contributed fifteen employability skills in hospitality courses. This study departs from most of the previous studies in that it focused on development of employability skills among vocational students in Malaysia.

Thirdly, all measurement for this study were proven to be valid and found to be highly reliable, when examined by the analysis and Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha. Therefore, it is a significant methodological contribution to the body of knowledge in terms of new findings pertaining to employability skills among vocational students in Malaysia.

Lastly, the instrument used to gauge student's employability skills had high construct validity and reliability. Though the instrument of the study also could be adopted by future researchers to replicated this study or further improve on it, and thus explore deeper, expand and adapt based on future evolution of this area. The employability skills also could be used by universities and higher educational authorities to evaluate employability skills among the students.

Practical Implication. A recommendation for educators, both tertiary and secondary level endeavors to encourage them to look to develop career advice. As young people, students need assistance in making the right decisions for their future and career advice can contribute to this by encouraging students in a direction that will benefit them. The author recalls her own course selection process which provided little guidance from a secondary school level. By providing better guidance students will be better equipped to further understand what career options they have and this may stop students (and their parents) forming a negative perception of an industry they know little about and thus thinking it is not the right industry for them.

It is important to ensure that education institutions work together to create a core curriculum to better the graduates and allow for their outcomes to be easily understood by the industry. While going to the extreme and standardizing education is not the intention, there is the ability to teach core concepts in innovative ways differentiating the institutions. Having a core set of concepts underlying each degree

could benefit the industry's understanding of what a degree enables the graduate to be capable of. This will minimize the confusion by industry about what each graduate has been educated or trained in and better understand their ability to work in the tourism and hospitality industry. Calls for this have been made in the past (Dredge, 2011) and with the ever-changing industry needs and little changes in curriculum this recommendation would need considerable regulation. In addition the recommendation is of considerable scale, nationally and globally, and therefore would need to be an ongoing process over a significant time period.

As the final recommendation, this thesis recaps (Richardson, 2010; Ross, 1992; Wang et al., 2010) calls for increased communication between industry and educators to provide graduates that are employable and will get employed. As this thesis has shown students are keen on entering the industry but without better communication the industry is not getting what they want and educators are producing graduates unwanted by the industry. For the benefit of graduates and the industry increased communication could enable courses to be developed with the needs of the industry as well as meeting the institution aims. This will be challenging as the industry changes very regularly and the industry also needs to know what it wants.

The findings and conclusions revealed that educators and recent graduates appear convinced regarding the role of employability skills training programs in the workforce of Malaysia: training programs can improve trainee skills. This sends positive feedback to governmental agencies and local training centers. However, employers are less certain with respect to the capability of employability skills training programs for improving the skills of recent graduates. This uncertainty may stem from their lack of involvement in workforce education and training in schools and universities.

This finding should signal governmental agencies and local training providers to engage in program improvement activities. Assessment and evaluation studies can assist in identifying key areas that are vital for program improvement. Both educators and recent graduates believe that employability skills training programs are relevant in minimizing unemployment in the Malaysian labor force, especially among recent graduates.

According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2014), most unemployed laborers in Malaysia are recent graduates who are between 20 and 29 years old, and are from postsecondary and tertiary learning institutions. Recent graduates without a job have opportunities to enroll in training programs. The programs train graduates how to obtain a job, thereby, minimizing unemployment. The effectiveness of training programs could inspire the government to initiate future policies and methods. The findings revealed that educators and recent graduates were convinced about the capability of training programs in developing the Malaysian labor force.

This level of confidence impacts the positive perceptions of educators and recent graduates toward policy and practice in workforce education and training. Positive perceptions also assist to alleviate traditional negative perceptions by the public concerning unemployed recent graduates and employability skills training programs. In the long term, such perceptions can change and create a more positive image of workforce education and training in Malaysia. The results identified why recent graduates enroll in employability skills training programs, including lack of skills of graduates and the poor economic environment.

These factors justify the need for training programs and can also be used to investigate program relevance. Stakeholders, such as policy makers, instructors, and future graduates could identify evidence for the rationale and relevance of training

programs. Although limited to the perceptions of the respondents, the measures of training programs are important for consideration by governmental agencies and local training centers. These results become the starting point for further assessment and evaluation involving employability skills training programs. Additionally, the results revealed the most integral skills for recent graduates to obtain employment in the competitive job market. The skills contribute to the knowledge base in TVE.

The present study provides a number of contributions to practice. This section describes the contributions derived from the findings of the study. In this study majority of the respondents are male and Malay students with CGPA range from 2.51 until 3.0. The results showed that the level of hospitality employability skills among vocational students in Malaysia were at high level of competence and importance (93.2%). Findings also revealed that male students are more competence in hospitality employability skills compare to female student in vocational colleges. The result also provides evident that rural students are more competence in hospitality employability skills compare urban student in vocational colleges. The result of the study found that the competence of bakery students in terms of employability skills is lower than the importance perceived by those students. The findings also showed that the competence of culinary students in terms of employability skills is lower than the importance perceived by those students. The findings provide insights to policy makers in both developing and developed countries whether the demand for employability skills students is affected when the assessment method changes. Thus, this study shows that hospitality vocational students today have expectations that are not completely consistent with current university practices. The students consider the higher education programs to be too focused on discipline and specific substantive content, including knowledge in IT and computer programing, technical and vocational skills and not

focused enough on the development of soft employability skills. Therefore, the function of professional education should, from the hospitality graduates' perspective, shift from direct, professional preparation for a static practice and instead focus on laying a general educational foundation for lifelong learning and facilitate the acquisition of the necessary specific professional competence at the workplace. These skills can then be developed further throughout one's professional career. Vocational college teachers are responsible to produce skilled students and future knowledge worker for the industry. 21st century demands vocational college teachers to have adequately knowledge, skills and attitude in profession.

Educators have a direct influence on students' impressions of life in the hospitality industry and the different experiences they may experience; if this is not regularly occurring in the classroom, students may not be prepared for a career after graduation. Along with providing students with the necessary knowledge and skills they will need to be successful, educators play an important role in guiding students in the development of realistic expectations and career plans. Educators should be receptive of information coming directly from industry representatives, whether through recent graduates or established advisory boards, to ensure quality student development. With so many students working in industry-based positions, educators and administrators of programs may need to evaluate the support tools and resources provided for students to be successful in the classroom and as an employee. While it would be helpful for industry representatives to think and plan students' experiences accordingly, educators are often in the best position to cater to individual student needs.

Leadership and Management Implications. The present study describes there is a need for understanding how academic courses are related to the

employability skills, the role of work placement and the curriculum. A considerate time must be allowed to study for understanding the changing needs of industry in hospitality so that the curriculums can be designed in the light of the results. Universities should take into consideration the incompetent skills. So, more programs should be designed to include such programs. The results of this study have pedagogical applications for the teaching of professional communication courses. Since communication skills carries the most weight among the soft skills, it is necessary to focus on upgrading students' language proficiency, communicative ability and interpersonal skills. Without good communication skills, students will not be able to convince their potential employers at interviews that they have an advantage in the required technical and soft skills for the advertised position. The communication skills referred to are often spoken skills. Therefore, in professional communication courses, it may be useful to have activities such as role plays which provide plenty of opportunities for students to learn to communicate in real-life work contexts. The communication skills targeted should not only be basic conversational skills but persuasive skills. Students should be trained to incorporate jargon from the field into their talk to show potential employers their familiarity with the field and the job. For example, hospitality graduates should be able to talk about timely and accurate preparation of full sets of hospitality activities reporting procedures instead of using general and vague words. However, having role plays in class may not develop their interpersonal skills adequately. To push their communicative skills further, it may be worthwhile to arrange mock interviews and other communicative situations with industry partners to give students a feel of the authentic workplace communication.

The fullest cooperation and support from the university administration, all concerned departments, and continuous training to update lecturers on the current

employability skills can help improving the employability skills among vocational students. Industry hospitality must actively take part in students' learning and they should maintain some sort of proximity with the educational forces that control the students' curriculum in vocational colleges and universities.

This study also gives a new inspiration of interrelation between discipline of knowledge where each discipline support each other for instance in this study; research in educational area had contributed to discipline of knowledge in the field of economics, accounting and business management in order to improve students' knowledge and content, to link knowledge with current and future need and to transfer the knowledge into the workplace.

Industry stakeholders should understand when providing hospitality students with quality work experience that their actions can potentially influence students' decisions to enter and continue employment in the hospitality industry. It should be essential that industry representatives work closely with hospitality programs and educators to ensure that students are developing realistic advancement expectations and positive perceptions of their future in the hospitality industry. Graduates who have established themselves in key positions and roles throughout the industry are in the best situation to hire hospitality students working while completing a college degree, guiding and sharing their experiences.

In order for students to gain the workplace skills they need, employers must become actively involved in their education; employers are key supporters of linking school and work. One of the basic premises of The School-to-Work Opportunities Act is to have local employers involved in designing schools' curriculum. Employers are more suitable in determining what they need from future employees, and therefore should have some say as to how the school's curriculum can benefit them. Whiting

and Kazis (1998) say employers in Boston, Fort Worth, Louisville, and Philadelphia are organizing to help transform public education in profound ways. They found that employers are helping in a combination of ways, such as defining and implementing rigorous academic standards, while others are embedding academic curricula in real-world contexts.

Employers are a powerful entity in the community because they know the regional economy; they control access to workplaces, and can shape their potential as learning environments for students. The economic profile of area communities is one that employers must be familiar with. The understanding of the sale of goods and services is what keeps area employers in business. Employers must be aware of the types of business transactions and fiscal activities that are imperative for the day to day operations of the business. They are well aware of the different skills needed to operate their business.

If a young employee is hired without the needed skills, the employer has to decide whether or not this potential employee is trainable based on the training and knowledge the student received in school. If the employer takes a chance on hiring and then training the employee, the employer must take in to account the amount of time, energy, and training needed to ensure that this employee is prepared for the job. Having competent teachers definitely will further securing the performance of vocational colleges in Malaysia. Since the introduction of vocational colleges system is still relatively new, it might improve the perceptions of public regarding the potential of vocational college as one of the field that also have future prospects not only in education but also in career choice.

Provides information for VC to evaluate and reexamine their current vocational teacher preparation and curriculum development. These can also provide vocational

teacher institutions with the latest information on in-demand competencies in how prepare competent teachers. Any improvement in teaching and learning environment increased the level of perception from the Malaysian and having more graduates from vocational college produce more pool of skilled workers in the market. Malaysian and Vocational Education Division (TVED) can use these to reevaluate the current practice in-service vocational teachers, and then identify problems faced by vocational teachers in teaching vocational subjects. Subsequently, TVED may provide professional development courses to overcome identified problems with new training and development model.

Theoretical Implication. The present study provides a theoretical contribution, in terms of adding to the body of literature, the significance of this study involves the newly developed employability skills in Malaysia. This study looks at the fifteen employability skills gap analysis in among bakery and culinary students in Vocational Colleges in Malaysia. These employability skills will be used for future research in order to determine the determinants of employability skills. The researcher decided to use fifteen employability skills which are Communication Skills, Teamwork Skills, Problem-solving Skills, Initiative and enterprise Skills, Planning and organizing Skills, Self-management Skills, Resource Management Skills, Technology Skills, Entrepreneurship Skills, Leadership Skills, Basic skills, Learning how to learn, Working with others, Ethical & professional moral and Technical & vocational skills compared to previous study. This is the first study in Malaysia contributed fifteen employability skills in hospitality courses. This study departs from most of the previous studies in that it focused on development of employability skills among vocational students in Malaysia.

Recommendations and Suggestions for the Future Studies

Based on findings of this research, the study offers recommendation to improve employability skills development through change management educators, perspective, in higher education institutions in Malaysia with a vision and mission of employability skills implementation. The recommendations for future research are formulated as follow:

This study was conducted with respondents from two selected program from vocational colleges in Malaysia, therefore further research can be expanded by involving others program in vocational colleges. Experimental research in developing employability skills related to students, academic achievement in classroom also can be designed and conducted. Using instrument of this study is an added advantage due to its validity.

Further research can be conducted in larger scale by involving all vocational colleges in Malaysia also will involving all programs in the vocational colleges. Triangulation study also can be done by involving lecturers, students and employers to participate in employability skills study a significant effort is needed to enhance employability skills students. Educators should be more dedicated in discussing, reading using information and communication technology related material.

Proper, regular and formal training programmes should be organised for junior lecturers. It is earnestly hoped that the lecturer be motivated highly as they change more competent in employability skills. Quality of the training given to the lecturers need to be improved in order to have a lecturers who are happy teaching their students. Policy should be taken as a serious concern also because many institutions do not have a proper policy on employability skills implementation.

Governmental agencies and industry should enhance their collaboration to provide effective workforce education and training in areas such as employability skills training programs. In particular, the government along with higher education institutions and training centers should encourage employers to become more involved in training programs. Employers should be given more responsibilities in education and training since they are major stakeholders.

Governmental agencies should consider obtaining input and feedback continuously from its stakeholders including industries, parents, communities, foreign traders, students, academicians, and investors before formulating major policies and decisions regarding workforce education, training, and human resource development. Governmental agencies should consider decentralizing employability skills training programs. Training centers should be provided the opportunity to initiate 118 training programs based on their analysis of the needs of the local workforce and their networking with local industry.

Policy makers should revise regulations and legislation in Malaysian industry to encourage participation of the private sector in local education and training institutions. Business and industry involvement is crucial in producing knowledgeable and skilled workers for the nation.

The federal government, local training centers, and instructors should provide stakeholders clear objectives for employability skills training programs. Widespread information regarding training programs can improve the perceptions of stakeholders and may remove previous and current negative perceptions about such programs.

Federal and local authorities should address the issue of uncertain perceptions among employers concerning employability skills training programs in Malaysia.

Employers may have limited perceptions and be unwilling to share academic research since they may not receive any immediate benefits.

Federal and local authorities should address the issue of negative perceptions of the current economic environment in Malaysia. Comments and critiques should be channeled and addressed appropriately to better serve the nation in the future.

Assessment and evaluation studies of employability skills training programs should be periodically conducted to assess the effectiveness of training programs. Such studies can provide the necessary direction for training programs in the competitive workforce. Future studies can help establish and maintain quality standards in training programs.

A balanced and flexible approach should be emphasized concerning employability skills training program curriculum through the integration of Technical and Vocational Education (TVE), knowledge base in employability and generalizable skills, demands and requirements of business and industry, and needs of the nation.

Employability skills training programs should increase the content of sustainable engineering, entrepreneurship, business training, lifelong learning, professionalism, and work ethic in curriculum. Such curriculum improvements would nurture potential engineers who are responsible for their nation's needs and concerns about local, environmental, social, and global issues.

Engineering, technical, and vocational educators should have on-going professional development opportunities other than through their affiliations with educational institutions. Professional development may include in-service education, business networking and partnerships, industrial internships, industrial consultations, and industrial training programs.

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Future research regarding the role of employability skills training programs should include innovative and appropriate statistical methods that can reveal factors

(e.g., gender, age, educational background, and program major) that may have a significant influence on perceptions.

Future research should include multiple data collection methods to increase survey response rates. Additionally, consideration should be given with respect to utilizing multiple research instruments in data collection (e.g., interviews, focus groups, and other qualitative tools and methods).

Future research should replicate this study by using instructors from training programs and employers representative of diverse occupational sectors. Replication studies should also consider the diverse nationwide population and subpopulations, rather than only those in the central economic region of the west coast.

Future research should consider investigating problems using experimental and correlational design studies. Such studies would assist to determine the effectiveness of employability skills training programs and their relationships with important variables across a variety of employment sectors

Investigate through factor analysis the construct validity of the Making the Match instrument before future use of the questionnaire. This analysis would lead to a better understanding of why specific questions of the individual constructs behave differently than the construct as a whole. Additionally, the analysis would lead to a better understanding of differences in responses from early and late respondents. Explore the results of this study by academic major to better understand the differences that may exist by graduates‟ major. Similarities and differences in results by department would better inform coordinating counselors and instructors of the different strategies that are resulting in positive impacts on student learning.

Contribution to the Literature

This study has significant value to research concerning employability skills or other relevant terms which refer to employability skills for instance core competencies, generic skills, and key skills. The contribution of this study has several first that should interest researchers not only academicians from Malaysia but also from other countries.

Contribution of Literature. This study discussed many aspects of employability skills related with definition and past studies (Chapter 2), it is expected that the discussion could yield ideas, description and inspiration to readers with regards to employability skills, particularly at vocational colleges. This study is the first study at vocational colleges related to hospitality employability skills in catering, bakery and pastry courses. Even another study across country related to employability skills might be rare. Until now the researcher did not find any similar study related with this area. Thus making this study important contribution to the limited literature that currently informs vocational colleges for the importance of employability skills to compete in graduate employment markets. This study leads to further consideration of emphases within the area of study in education. This study has brought innovative ideas of research method in higher education in general and employability skills specifically. Another interesting contribution that could be made from this study is that the research methodology used to gather data were mixed mode method; quantitative was by questionnaire as the main data gathering and qualitative data were by focused group discussion. The combination of techniques is interesting where the result of qualitative data supported the main findings of the study.

Contribution to Academician and Further Researchers. This study also gives contribution to academicians across country to enhance their understanding of

the study, practically the findings of this study can be used for improvement quality of teaching processes and outcomes of vocational colleges. As the study involved students in vocational colleges of two courses which are catering, bakery and pastry, this study has provided the springboard for other researcher and academicians to conduct further study. The implications associated with the findings of this study may be useful for both hospitality educational providers and future hospitality graduates. The findings are hoped to assist colleges and universities offering degrees programme related to hospitality management to strengthen the curriculum aligned with the findings. It is noteworthy for hospitality educational providers to form strategic partnership with the hospitality industry. It is also apparent from these findings that hospitality education providers should incorporate competencies required by the industry in order to produce future Malaysian hospitality graduates who are competitive in the work market and have a grasp of recent competencies. The implications associated with the findings of this study may be useful for both hospitality educational providers and future hospitality graduates. The findings are hoped to assist colleges and universities offering degrees programed related to hospitality management to strengthen the curriculum aligned with the findings. It is noteworthy for hospitality educational providers to form strategic partnership with the hospitality industry. It is also apparent from these findings that hospitality education providers should incorporate competencies required by the industry in order to produce future Malaysian hospitality graduates who are competitive in the work market and have a grasp of recent competencies.

Contribution to Authorities of Higher Education. The findings of this study soon will be published in journals and conferences, it is expected the publications could tell the higher educational authorities that important steps and strategies should

be implemented to ensure the developing of vocational students employability skills in any subject taken. This study also provides theoretical conceptual framework at vocational colleges that can be used by authorities of Higher education to initiate and even to improve the quality system of Higher Education. Technical vocational education institutions must make a greater effort to help students acquire the employability skills required by many organizations. The development of employability skills should be integrated into the curriculum to ensure that students graduate from these institutions with the skills needed by employers.

If institutions do not attempt to integrate the development of these skills, they may end up graduating students who cannot fit into the 21st century workforce, thereby becoming unemployed in the society. Therefore, TVE institutions must find ways to ensure that their graduates are well equipped with the needed skills required for employment in the 21st century. Different countries in the world especially the developing countries need high-skilled workers to propel the country toward a high-income society, but these high-skilled workers need employability skills. Jobs change rapidly and workers must be able to adapt to these changes if they are to contribute to the economic development of the country in the present 21st century.

One element of further research is to do a wider study similar to this one which compares the different institutions as well as different countries. A contrast and comparison across a wider context assist in forming generalizations on a global scale. Such a similar study would also benefit from looking at the industry's perception of graduates. This would enable the industry and educators to clearly define whether expectations match, further enabling stakeholders to manage the situation that becomes evident. Further opportunities could also be recognized by conducting a longitudinal study of students looking at their intentions and perceptions of the

industry at an entry level and follow this through to graduation and beyond. This would enable conclusions to be drawn on the impact of the course, where students obtain work on graduation and how long they stay working in the industry, if at all. Finally, research could be completed in looking at perceptions from a vocational college level which would be able to explore if these perceptions of the industry are held before a student enrolls in tertiary education. The results of this study can help universities to improve their curriculums, in accordance with current market requirements. Furthermore, universities should conduct a study to determine the level of graduates' competency on employability skills. Therefore, this information can assist them to re-allocate their resources and implement improvement programs, such as facilities development, financial reallocation, and curriculum development, in order to improve graduate's employability skills.

Contribution to the instrumentation for further study. The instrument used to gauge the vocational student employability skills had high construct validity and reliability. Though the instrument of this study was firstly developed in Malaysia by Zalizan Mohammad, Jelas et al., (2006) and was adapted for the use of this study, the instrument is reliable and valid to be used in this country. The employability skills instrument also could be adopted by future researchers to replicate this study, or further improve on it, and thus explore deeper, expand and adapt based on future evolution of study in this area. The employability skills also could be used by vocational colleges and higher educational authorities to evaluate employability skills according to students' perceptions.

Conclusion

Data collected and presented in this study underlined the employability skills and the importance of level on employability skills among vocational students in

Malaysia. Though the result of the study found some differences of students' employability skills among vocational colleges, however there are similar trend to focus process of learning on knowledge content. On other hand, there was an effort to integrate employability skills into classroom in the vocational colleges.

Graduates should have leave higher education better in many ways than when they entered it, and this improvement should be attributable to the vocational colleges' curriculum rather than to the fact they are simply three to five years. They need to be equipped with employability skills that they can use to "sell themselves" to employers. In short, integrating employability skills into existing curriculum can enhance the quality of the content learning by promoting experiential and active learning approaches. In addition, some parts of this thesis will be published in journals and conference proceedings, therefore academician, lecturers, researcher and policy makers of higher education can retrieve beneficial information and issues related to vocational students' employability skills at vocational colleges from the resources.

The issue of having graduates which can fulfill the industry needs is mostly concerned the competencies possess by the graduates. Similarly, the issue is becoming a vital aspect in the hospitality industry. This study concerned on the competencies which should be possessed by the hospitality graduates as required by the industry. This is important for the graduates to survive in the future challenges within the industry itself.

Additionally, the employability skills has been added more for the purpose of determining competencies hospitality graduates in the case of Malaysian higher educational institutions. The study also provides a significant skills of graduates' competencies for the hospitality education programs, thus to produce qualified graduates according to the industry needs. It can be summarized that the skills has gone

through a systematic methodology approach and well established process of developing a standard skills which can be applied in other related studies concerning the identification of graduates' competencies. The skills also consists of competencies required by the industry, thus these competencies are vital in order for the graduates to enter the industry and furthermore to survive with the future challenges. By having a standard measurement to determine competencies needed from the graduates, the industry can promise effective and qualified employees to deal with customers' needs. This aspect significantly contributes to fulfill the gaps exist between what the educational institutions provide and the industry expectations. Specifically, it also contributes to the needs of stakeholders' involvement in designing and improving the tourism and hospitality education curriculum so as to create a well-balanced approach of theory and practical. Industry plays important role in determining the competencies of the graduates thus the development of a standard index significantly contributes to the identification and selection of quality graduates to serve within the hospitality environment.

One of the many challenges facing the Malaysian hospitality industry nowadays is the attraction and retention of young people in the highly competitive employment market. Despite issues relating to shortage of supply, job-hopping, high staff turnover, the deficit in the number and poor transfer of graduates into the industry were found to be the most critical problem in the country. Many new hospitality graduates do not enter the industry upon completion of their studies. Of those who enter the industry, it contended that many soon decide not to pursue a full-time or long-term hospitality career. New hospitality graduates only work in their first job for a few months before moving to either gain experience or through a process of trial and error seeking more acceptable jobs in other industries (MAH, 1996; 1997). Many

researchers argue that one of the causes of poor transition rates of hospitality students into the industry is that new student has unrealistic images of working life in the industry (Barron & Maxwell, 1993; Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000; Fraser, 2000; Zahari, 2004). It is believed that this phenomenon might be influenced by various factors impacting students' interest in, and attitudes towards, hospitality careers. There have been a few studies of secondary students' attitudes and perception of careers in the tourism and hospitality industries. Some have found a positive response while others were negative. Ross (1991) found that senior school students had positive attitudes towards potential careers and high levels of interest in management positions in the tourism and hospitality industry. Ross (1997) also examined travel agency employment perceptions and preferences among secondary school leavers. He found that travel agency employment was favored among potential hospitality industry employees. In comparing the career attitudes of secondary students in Greece and the United Kingdom, Airey and Frontisis (1997) identified that the Greek students had positive attitudes towards hospitality employment. This positive view, however, was tempered by their suggestion that it was in part due to the students' relatively unrealistic views about careers in the industry, their limited experience as hospitality consumers and the employment structure in Greece. Differences in students' levels of experience and differences in the employment structures of the two countries played an important part in forming these attitudes.

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